

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for social and policy change. Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we offer specialist education and support.

Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.

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Published – April 2020



**We need an education:
making the ordinary possible
for children and young people
with autism**

Annual report and accounts for the year
ended 31 August 2019



**I know now looking back that the education system can be cruel
It's not designed for people like me to access school
It's a continuous battle and a lengthy fight
To get students like me in a school that is right**

**But remember there is value in looking at the wrong
Because it can go on to help others to find where they too belong
So, believe me when I say we will not give up this fight
That every autistic child deserves an education that's right. ”**

From a poem by Bella Cope
Ambitious about Autism Youth Patron

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Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism. We exist to make the ordinary possible for these young people, **and they are at the heart of all that we do.**

Left to right: Sir Trevor Pears, Pears Foundation, Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, President, Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive

Welcome to our annual report

An introduction from the Chief Executive and the Chair of Trustees

We began our journey in 1997, when a small group of innovative parents set up TreeHouse School. At a time when children with autism faced little or no chance of receiving a full and rewarding education, these parents were determined to bring about real change for their children.

This pioneering spirit has remained at the heart of our organisation as we have evolved and progressed. What started with four pupils has grown to become a charity that has supported thousands of children and young people with autism.

Despite our many successes, the sad fact is that children and young people with autism still face a lack of understanding of their needs.

This annual report demonstrates our work to give children and young people with autism a fighting chance – right from the start, from their earliest years and into adulthood - and our plans to continue this work in the future.

We expect the spread of COVID-19 will have a significant impact on the UK and global economy and this is likely to affect the funding of support for children and young people with autism. Our Trustees are already assessing the additional risks and will continue to monitor and mitigate these. With your support, we are confident that we can continue to help children and young people with autism.

What we do wouldn't be possible without you – our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, and generous partners and supporters. No matter how you contribute, you are a crucial part of our mission to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.



Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive



Neil Goulden
Chair of Trustees



We're passionate about championing our right to a full education and inclusion, and about tackling social isolation and loneliness. We will continue to empower and support more autistic young people.

An update from our Youth Council



This year our Youth Council has continued to innovate and progress, with new Youth Patrons joining our expanding Ambitious Youth Network. They have stories to share and the ambition to make things better for their peers.

We started the year preparing for our event: the 'We need an education' debate in October 2018 at the Clothworkers' Hall in London. During the evening we shared our experiences of education as autistic young people. For many of us, it was the first time we'd made a speech to a large audience but this was a great opportunity for us to put our views front and centre of the debate.

Through the Autism Education Trust Young People's Panel, we've used our experiences to establish key educational principles. At conferences, we've shared the message of a more inclusive education system for autistic young people.

In March 2019, a group of us met Nadhim Zahawi MP, who was then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, to tell him about the issues affecting autistic children and young people at school, such as widespread school exclusions, bullying and loneliness. He asked us to contribute directly to the Government's Autism Strategy.

Young autistic people can also feel isolated outside of school. So, we've worked directly with the Postal Museum, Pitzhanger Manor &

Gallery, the Science Museum and the Wellcome Collection, to ensure that autistic young people can enjoy the same leisure and extra-curricular education opportunities as their peers.

In April, during Autism Awareness Week, we launched the Include Autism toolkit for developing autism-inclusive youth groups, promoting it on Channel 5 news and in local papers. Teachers, healthcare professionals, youth workers and government departments helped to spread the word. This was all possible thanks to the generosity of the Comic Relief Sustainability Fund.

With Whittington Health NHS Trust, we launched resources to improve access to healthcare. These included youth-led education days for professionals and wider consultancy about why autistic people find it difficult to use healthcare services.

We're looking forward to building on this exciting work in the year ahead.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council, 2018-19

Strategic report

How we work

This was the second year of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy. In 2018-19, our strategic objectives focused on six outcomes, which are taking us closer to achieving our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Evidence: Increase our evidence base of what works for children and young people with autism (0-25) in education and training.



Empower: More children and young people with autism are empowered to influence decisions about their lives as a result of our work.



Inform: More decisions made by policy-makers, commissioners and funders are based on our evidence of what works for children and young people with autism.



Knowledge: More families have increased knowledge and confidence to support children and young people with autism to make and/or influence decisions.



Autism confident: More professionals and education providers are autism confident.



Progress: More children and young people with autism (0-25) have access to high-quality education provision.



This report outlines our progress against our strategic objectives and outcomes across the two main areas of our work – education and external affairs.

Our work is underpinned by strong foundations and values

Our vision is a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Our mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Our values Children and young people with autism are at the centre of all that we do.

Investing in our staff to make sure our work has the biggest impact on children and young people with autism.



We value difference: given how unique every experience of autism really is, we work hard to develop personalised solutions for the children and young people we work with.

We are open: to new ideas, in how we work and how we make decisions.

We believe in the talent of our staff and bring this expertise together as an organisation to challenge the status quo for children and young people with autism.

We are team players

We are team players: in how we work within the organisation, with children and young people, with parents and carers, and with our partners.

Why we are needed

The current reality facing children and young people with autism



One in 100
people in the UK have autism.

On average, families are waiting **18 months**  for an autism diagnosis.

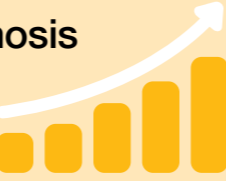



Four times as many boys as girls are diagnosed with autism, although this ratio may change as the needs of girls on the spectrum become better understood.

Nearly **40%** 

of parents whose child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan waited 18 months for this assessment for vitally needed support in school, at home and in the community.

More than **130,000** pupils with special educational needs are autistic and this number is growing.

Formal exclusions from school of those with an autism diagnosis have risen by **60% in five years.** 

 Fewer than **one in four** young people with autism access education beyond school.

56% of children with autism have been sent home illegally or denied a full education.

 Almost **one third** of parents of children with autism have had to give up their job due to school exclusions.

Only **16%**  of adults with autism are currently in full-time paid employment.

Only **15%**  of young people with autism believe employers will offer them a job.

72%  of employers say they have not built neurodiversity into their inclusion policies, and too few neurodivergent people are managing to find employment and thrive in the workplace.

Cost per year **£32bn**  The cost to society as a result of the lack of support for autistic people and their families. This is more than the cost of stroke, cancer and heart disease combined.

What we do

Ambitious highlights in 2018–19: how we've made a difference for children and young people with autism this year.

Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College we offer specialist education and support.



We helped more children and young people through our schools and college than ever before. In 2018–19 we directly educated 250 children and young people. We offer a highly personalised curriculum and positively support our pupils and learners to acquire new skills and take part in everyday life.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for change.



We held our 'We need an education' debate in October. This was co-created with members of our Youth Council who shared their personal and moving experiences of education – good and bad. Many of these young people were speaking in front of an audience for the first time. We continued throughout the year to highlight the need for a better education for children and young people with autism.



Following 12 months of research and learning, we established the Ambitious Approach, our model of education best practice created to support children and young people with autism. At its heart, our approach is centred around improving the quality of life of young people with autism while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. Thanks to the generous support of the Joseph Levy Foundation, this year we were able to train our school and college staff in order to begin developing the Ambitious Approach.

Our Youth Council met with Nadhim Zahawi MP, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families to tell him about 'We need an education'. They discussed some of the issues affecting young people with autism at school and were invited to give their views to help develop the Government's new autism strategy, which has been extended to include children and young people with autism.



We celebrated the fifth year of our successful Autism Exchange paid work experience programme. This year, more than 140 young people accessed support. Of those in a placement lasting eight weeks or more, 100% secured work.



Our Youth Council created 'Include Autism', to help tackle the problem of loneliness and social isolation felt by many of their peers. The online toolkit offers advice and tips on how to enable more young people with autism to participate in youth groups and after-school activities. It has been downloaded nearly 1,500 times.

Ambitious College supported 32 of our learners to access education, employment or community living on graduating.

We developed The Rise Sixth Form, which opened in September 2019. Co-located at West Thames College, this expanded provision will begin to tackle the severe shortage of post-16 schools for pupils with special educational needs in the UK.



We significantly expanded the reach of our training programme to help professionals to better support children and young people with autism in education and employment. More than 4,000 people benefitted from our training to become more autism confident. Of those completing the training, 96% said this had improved their knowledge and confidence.

Our Night of Ambition in partnership with TalkTalk raised a vital £430,000 for our work – making the total amount raised through this partnership well over £4m! And for the first time, the route of the annual Rapha cycle challenge between London and Manchester was reversed, increasing the challenge for 100 heroic riders. Our partnership with Rapha has raised more than £1.2 million for Ambitious about Autism since we joined forces in 2014.



We need an education

I can remember a time when people said to me
High School days are the greatest of your life; you'll see
As though it was a given that they'd be the best
Leaving you feeling anything but stressed

So, at 11 I moved to what felt like hell
The noise and crowds leaving me just an empty shell
High school felt like an alien land
I felt trapped in a place for which I had not planned

For four years I managed to just get by
I kept telling myself I just needed to try
But by this point I wanted to be anyone but me
I craved to be a girl able to cope and feel free

Then at 15 I fell apart unable to cope anymore
I had to drop out of school for that I was sure
I was misunderstood, overwhelmed and terrified
All I wanted to ever do was escape school and hide

I started to get help from therapists, doctors and more
But in my head, it was too late I had nothing left to live for
After many months of struggling to see a way out
The professionals finally listened to what
my mum was on about

After assessments and tests, they realised she was right
Being diagnosed on the autistic spectrum
allowed my future to look bright
For me a diagnosis provided answers and hope
It meant I could return to school with
the right support to cope

After years of struggling as a girl with autism in education
Now I had my diagnosis school supported me
without hesitation
I was able to complete my GCSEs and A levels too
Getting to this point in my life felt too good to be true

I know now looking back that the education
system can be cruel
It's not designed for people like me to access school
It's a continuous battle and a lengthy fight
To get students like me in a school that is right

But remember there is value in looking at the wrong
Because it can go on to help others to find
where they too belong
So, believe me when I say we will not give up this fight
That every autistic child deserves an education that's right.

By Bella Cope, Ambitious about Autism Youth Patron

Every day a child with autism is denied an education.
Step in to show your support.



The story of our year We need an education

One in 100 people in the UK are autistic, a condition affecting the way a person communicates with, and experiences, the world around them. It is described as a spectrum condition. This means that while people with autism share certain characteristics, they are highly individual in their interests, needs and preferences.

Autism is many things but, put simply, it's a different way of viewing and experiencing the world. Some people with autism can live independent lives, while others face additional challenges, including learning difficulties, which affect them so profoundly that they need support in many areas.

This year we continued 'We need an education', calling for a fairer deal for all children and young people with autism from our education system. Despite the hard work and efforts of our pupils and learners, their parents, our staff and volunteers, the facts are indisputable – children and young people with autism are still being left out and left behind. Their right to education must be protected.

We must:

- ensure that children and young people with autism have access to the right education
- tackle the disproportionate number of young people with autism being excluded from education
- provide more support for school staff to help children with autism thrive
- support young people with autism to progress into employment, further education or training, and to live as part of the communities of their choice.

denied education



Ambitious
about Autism



Getting it 'right from the start'

Early support and education are critical if children and young people with autism are to learn, thrive and achieve. How many more children, and their families, must wait 18 months or longer for a diagnosis and early support?

We want more families to be better informed and have the confidence to support children and young people with autism to make and/or influence decisions affecting their lives.

This year we embarked on plans to develop a programme of support to help parents understand their options if they think their young child may have autism. 'Right from the Start' is a major new programme aimed at helping families with young children to navigate the autism diagnosis process.

We worked with the University of Warwick, University College London and a host of partners in the fields of autism, health and early education, as well as parents and young people, to research what families need, develop solutions and provide trusted information.

The result is 'Right from the Start', a toolkit and guide to autism in the early years (launched in early 2020). It contains information to help families with young children feel fully informed and better able to provide and secure the support their child needs as early as possible.

“

Being told that services even existed certainly would have helped. I just didn't know that there was anything... I had no idea what was even out there because there's just no information readily available.”

Mother of child with autism reflecting on her experience post-diagnosis.

Learn, thrive and achieve

More than 130,000 pupils with special educational needs are autistic and this number is growing. We want more children and young people with autism to have access to high-quality education.

Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College we offer specialist education and support to enable more children and young people to access the high-quality education that they deserve.

In 2018–19, 81% of parents and carers told us they gained knowledge, and 80% gained confidence to support their children, as a result of their child's placement in one of our educational settings.

Quality is at the top of the agenda in everything we do, with a focus on meeting the individual needs of children and young people with autism to succeed in education and prepare for adulthood.

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust was established as a multi-academy trust to develop new free schools. The Trust shares our vision and mission. Through the Trust,

we intend to develop more schools to reach the children and young people with autism who need our specialist support.

We welcome opportunities and partnerships to achieve our aim of more children and young people with autism accessing high-quality education and making outstanding progress.

“

Ambitious about Autism is helping my boys to reach their full potential. They have blossomed in their three-year placement. Young people with autism desperately need colleges of excellence like Ambitious provides.”

Sarah Ziegel, mother of Ambitious College pupils



“

If not for the opportunity to join The Rise, I fear I would have ended up like the growing number of children that just vanish from the radar of councils and schools because [their parents] have given up hope of getting the right education for their children and instead have chosen [for their children] to be home schooled. I want the number of people who have given up lowering to zero.”

Kieran, pupil at The Rise School and Youth Patron

TreeHouse School

Ofsted **Outstanding**

Muswell Hill, London
treehouseschool.org.uk

Pupil numbers

88

Attendance

95%

Percentage of pupils who met or exceeded their expected progress level

85%

Quality of teaching and learning ranked good or outstanding

97%



Our TreeHouse School is a very special place to learn. This non-maintained special school supports children and young people with autism aged 3–19. We pride ourselves on the rich experience our pupils enjoy. Our curriculum consists of academic and social activities, and is tailored to each pupil's unique qualities and specific needs.

Our pupils receive specialist and personalised support through our dedicated transdisciplinary team of qualified teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists and behaviour analysts.

At TreeHouse School we strongly believe in the voice of young people and their parents and carers. Family support is especially important to us, because we recognise that every child and young person has different needs.

This year, TreeHouse School continued to provide individual and personalised learning and support to our young people, allowing them to progress and flourish.

The Saplings project

The Saplings project at TreeHouse School was established in 2018 thanks to the kindness and hard work of a number of volunteer groups, TreeHouse staff and pupils. It's a wonderful outdoor space providing our pupils with the opportunity to learn more about the natural world and develop new skills.

Pupils learn about horticulture and ecology, nurturing vegetables and flowers from seed to harvest, making insect hotels, and gaining skills to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award. In 2019, to expand the project, we began 'Seed to sell', a social enterprise pilot. We grow and sell organic vegetables to staff and neighbours. This increases community engagement and teaches pupils important maths and life skills, including the value of being rewarded for what you do.

In September 2019, following an online public vote, project lead Julia Lampard won the BIG Diversity Challenges community engagement award.

Julia said: "As a result of the project pupils are learning valuable work-related skills and a respect for the natural environment. The site's location, adjacent to a busy pathway, has been a bonus, generating discussions about the work with passers-by."

"Our vision for the future is to focus further on the site biodiversity – particularly frogs, newts, pollinators and insects."



The Rise School

Ofsted Good

Feltham, London
theriseschool.com

Pupil numbers

95

Attendance

95%

Percentage of pupils who met or exceeded their expected progress level

86%

Quality of teaching and learning ranked good or outstanding

86%



The Rise School was the first to be set up by our **Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust**. It's a vibrant environment dedicated to educating pupils with autism aged 4–19. We have two pillars that run throughout all our work: the academic and social support of all our pupils.

At The Rise School, it's vital that our learners have a voice and a choice in how they learn. As communication can be difficult for many of them, we invest in the skills and resources that allow them to take part in a variety of ways.

It's been an exciting year of progress and growth at The Rise School.

Over the summer, after many months of planning and hard work, we completed the development of The Rise Sixth Form in time for the 2019–20 academic year. Co-located at West Thames College, it gives our pupils over the age of 16 the opportunity to continue their learning in a supportive and successful environment.

Our second cohort of 12 Year 11 pupils achieved superb results this year. They all progressed to Year 12, with nine transferring to The Rise Sixth Form, and three starting courses of their choice at other colleges. These results defy the national picture that less than 25% of young people with autism attend education beyond statutory school age.

Simon's story of success

In 2018–19, Simon was one of our first Year 12 pupils who took Level 2 courses at West Thames College – a successful first for The Rise School.

Simon benefitted greatly from the support he received from The Rise School support staff based at West Thames, who helped him complete his college studies. This was important, because in addition to academic support, Simon needed to have people with him that he knew and trusted.

Adjusting to college life was a big step for Simon because of the very different expectations he now faced. The Rise School support staff were fundamental to helping him achieve independence and make progress. Thanks to their knowledge of him and their shared history, he was able to achieve his goals and enjoy a successful start to his college studies.

We learned a lot from this experience at The Rise School. As we found out more about what worked, we were fully prepared to welcome our first cohort of students to The Rise Sixth Form at West Thames College in September 2019.

Helen Ralston, Headteacher,
The Rise School



Ambitious College

Ofsted **Good**

Pears Campus, College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, London

Pears Campus, West Thames College, London

ambitiouscollege.org.uk

Learner numbers

77

Attendance

96%

Percentage of pupils who met or exceeded their expected progress level

87%

Quality of teaching and learning ranked good or outstanding

88%



Ambitious College is London's only specialist day college. We provide specialist and integrated further education support for people with autism aged 16–25. 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.

At Ambitious College we believe that every young person attending the college deserves a fulfilling, happy and rewarding life. We have Learner Councils on both campuses and a number of ways of listening creatively to our learners and hearing what they want to tell us about college life.

It's been a hectic but exciting year for Ambitious College.

In April we formally launched our second campus, Pears campus at West Thames College, with an afternoon tea event. It was a wonderful celebration, and a great opportunity to thank our learners, parents and carers, teaching staff and partners.

In partnership with the Whittington Hospital, the college team has also been working hard on the development of our new Supported Internship programme. The programme, which opened in September 2019, enables young people with autism to develop workplace skills.

Ben's story: 'To infinity and beyond!'

Ben recently graduated from Ambitious College. His mother Wendy tells the story of his progression through college and into further education.

"At Ambitious College, Ben had so many opportunities to try different things, such as going to the gym and taking part in Pilates classes. He has also completed two work placements, at a local library and the RAF Museum in Hendon. Through these he developed a great work ethic.

"The college offers learners a highly personalised curriculum and real work experience, supported by a team of dedicated and specialist staff. Ambitious College has been fantastic for Ben. He's transformed into a happy, confident young man. He has a great sense of humour and extensive knowledge of all things Disney!

"For us as a family, it's also great to feel part of the team around Ben. There has always been a lot of two-way communication with staff at the college about his progress.

"Ben has now graduated from Ambitious College and went on to enrol at North Hertfordshire College, where he undertook a transition course focusing on independence and employability skills – with the hope of joining the college's supported internship programme.

"Don't get me wrong, it's not been a miracle but with positive encouragement and high expectations, Ben has been empowered to develop and grow. In fact, in the words of one of his favourite Disney characters, he's been helped to prepare for 'infinity and beyond'."



Developing the Ambitious Approach

We designed the Ambitious Approach model of educational practice to support children and young people with autism. We use international research findings, commissioned studies and in-house research and evaluation of our own services as the foundations of this model.

Sometimes, education settings unknowingly undermine quality of life for learners or miss opportunities to enhance it. At its heart, the Ambitious Approach is specifically about improving quality of life for children and young people with autism in education and ensuring this continues into adulthood.

We are constantly developing, searching for and open to new approaches that are ethical and have a robust evidence base. We share our experience and evidence with others to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of autism education.

The Ambitious Approach is based on a particular set of principles. One of these is Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), which

incorporates what is known about supportive practice for children and young people with autism. Our approach is designed to provide holistic support throughout an education setting.

The Ambitious Approach is based upon a person's indisputable rights to be:

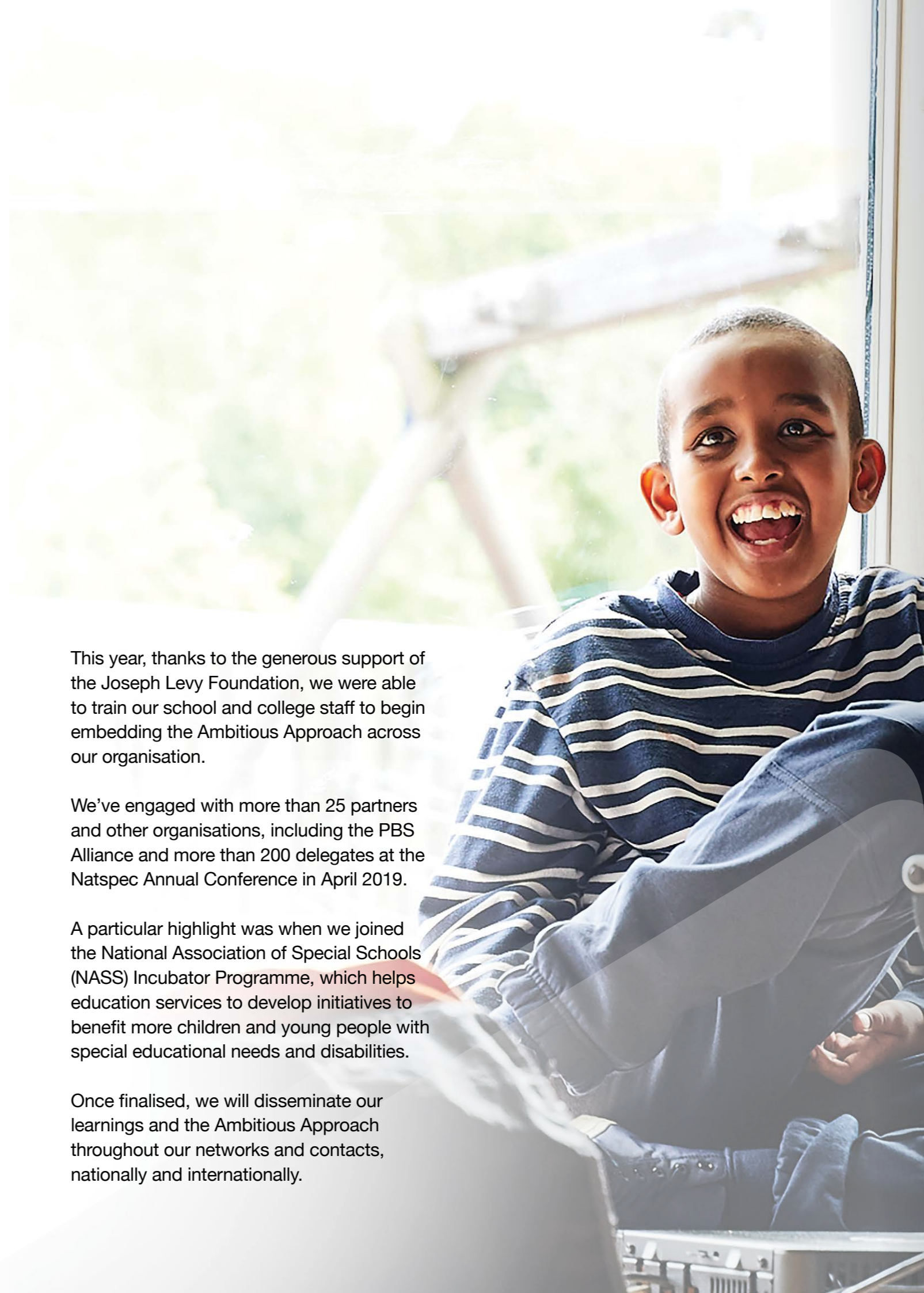
- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

This year, thanks to the generous support of the Joseph Levy Foundation, we were able to train our school and college staff to begin embedding the Ambitious Approach across our organisation.

We've engaged with more than 25 partners and other organisations, including the PBS Alliance and more than 200 delegates at the Natspec Annual Conference in April 2019.

A particular highlight was when we joined the National Association of Special Schools (NASS) Incubator Programme, which helps education services to develop initiatives to benefit more children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Once finalised, we will disseminate our learnings and the Ambitious Approach throughout our networks and contacts, nationally and internationally.



Include Autism

Children and young people with autism are at the heart of everything we do. We champion them and make sure policy-makers, decision-makers, the media and the general public hear their voices. For our work to reflect their views and needs, we must listen to what they have to say.

It is vital, then, that children and young people with autism actively participate in our work – through pupil and learner councils in our education settings, and our multiple youth networks, including the Youth Council.

Members of our Youth Council act as ambassadors for the charity, meeting with policy-makers and decision-makers, carrying out interviews in the media and speaking at events.

More young people with autism are now able to express themselves through a rapidly growing online youth network. They can share experiences, have their say on the charity's projects and discover other ways of advocating for improved services.



Creating the 'Include Autism' toolkit

Youth groups and extracurricular activities are a very important part of young people's lives – helping them make new friends, grow in confidence and develop new skills. Yet, sadly, we know it's difficult for many young people with autism to attend youth groups due to problems with accessibility and a misunderstanding of autism.

To tackle this problem, our Youth Patrons created 'Include Autism', a toolkit for developing autism-inclusive youth groups. To promote the toolkit, Youth Patrons and Ambitious about Autism staff held a series of 'Include Autism' workshops for children, young people, parent volunteers and youth workers. We reached 415 people, with many of them taking the 'Include Autism' message back to their workplaces and other networks.

After the workshop...

92%
of attendees felt confident about supporting a person with autism

92%
of attendees felt confident about adapting activities to meet the needs of young people with autism

80%
of attendees felt confident about adapting their communication style for young people with autism



“

The whole thing was incredibly educational and interesting. Yet I think my favourite part was hearing the personal experience stories – both positive and negative – and understanding how we can use these experiences to adjust our services.”

Feedback from 'Include Autism' workshop participant

Education is a right for all

Children with autism have the same right to education as their peers, but are more likely to be excluded from school than any other child. In a survey of parents and carers, nearly half of families told us their child has been unlawfully excluded from school. How many more children will be failed before anyone listens?

Children with autism are more likely to be excluded permanently from school through a lack of understanding, funding and support. That's why we work with a range of partners to influence policy-makers, commissioners, funders and government. We want them to make decisions based on our evidence, so that children and young people with autism are supported to learn, thrive and achieve, and get the respect they deserve.

Through 'We need an education' (see page 16), our media and policy work, and the work of our Youth Patrons, we have continued to speak out on behalf of children and young people with autism.

In May 2019, we responded to the long-awaited Timpson Review of School Exclusions. Regrettably, the review failed to tackle the widespread problem of unlawful exclusions and off-rolling, despite evidence that 56% of the families we surveyed said they had a child with autism who had been unlawfully sent home or denied a full education.

Using government data, our research showed that **formal exclusions from school of those with an autism diagnosis had risen by 60% in five years, compared to a 4% increase for the whole school population.**

We are continuing to put pressure on the Government on this issue, calling for more strategies to support and expand understanding of vulnerable children's needs before things reach crisis point.

We also continued to speak out on the lack of funding for children with special educational needs. The Government must ensure that funding within the overall education system is sufficient to meet the needs of children and young people with autism.

In July, the Education Select Committee published its report into school and college funding, saying that the Government must increase high-needs funding for special educational needs and disabilities to address a projected £1.2 billion deficit. We gave oral evidence to the Education Select Committee in October 2018 and are named in the report.



The Government has made it very clear that unlawful exclusions should never happen – and yet if schools are not held to account when they break the law, these incidents will continue to slip under the radar. The result is autistic pupils missing out on thousands of hours of education they are entitled to – and being pushed out of mainstream education.”

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive,
Ambitious about Autism



Helping the world around us become autism confident

Autism confidence in education

As part of 'We need an education' (see page 16), we called for all teachers and school staff, from governors to teaching assistants, to be fully autism aware, and trained to support and help children with autism. We also work with parents and carers, local authorities, services and our organisational partners to provide the training, knowledge and skills to help more people to become autism confident.

This year, we significantly expanded the reach of our [training programme](#) to train more than 4,000 professionals to better support children and young people with autism in education and employment. Of those completing the training, 96% said they felt they had improved their knowledge and confidence.

In addition, we have worked with the [Autism Education Trust \(AET\)](#) to ensure early years schools and post-16 settings, nationally, access standards, competency frameworks and training. We also acted as an AET hub for training courses in London and the East of England.

Around 70% of pupils with autism are taught in mainstream schools, so every teacher will have a child with autism in their class at some point during their career.



This training really had an impact on my understanding of how coping with autism on a day-to-day basis through adulthood is a great challenge and the coping strategies they need to learn. Meeting [our trainer] Ian, as an adult is very inspiring. Thank you! ”

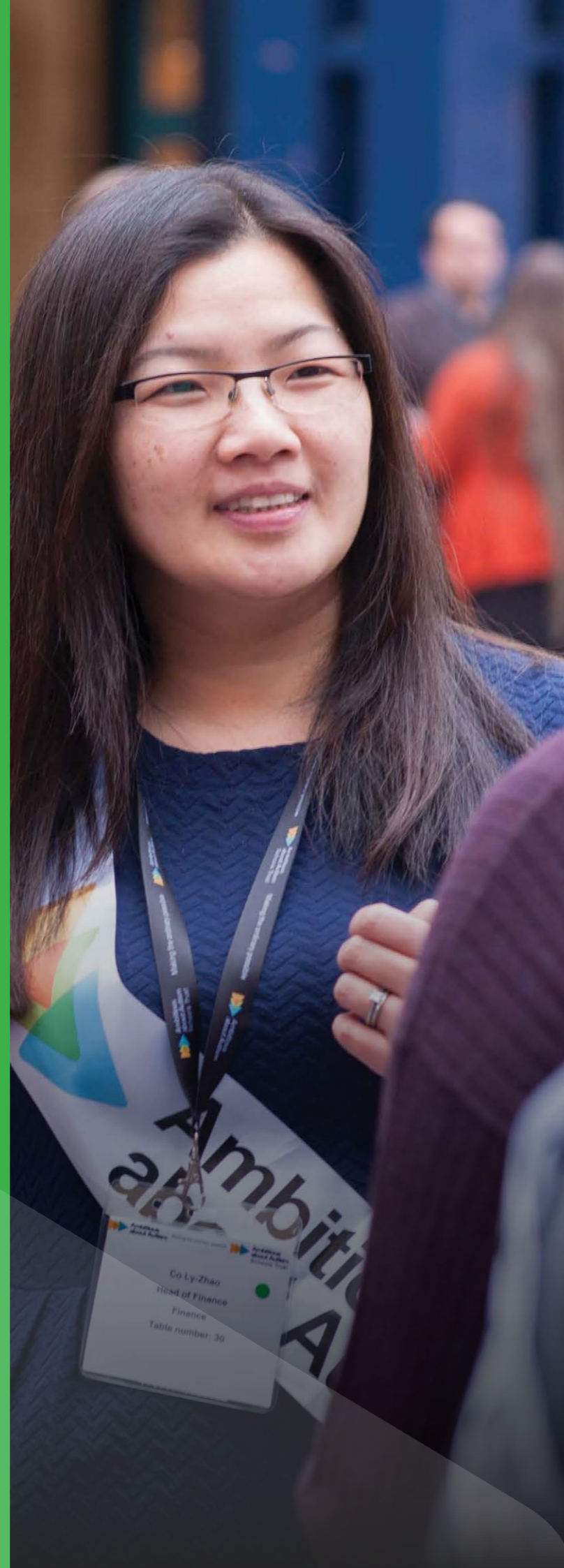
Participant at Norfolk County Council local authority and NHS training

Norfolk gains confidence

Local authority and NHS staff must be trained in supporting people with autism to access services. We've started working with a number of local authorities to deliver this work in their boroughs, securing six new contracts, including one with Norfolk County Council.

We delivered training to all employees who work with people with autism across Norfolk County Council, including those who carry out assessments. This gave them the skills to understand how the condition presents in people on the spectrum, and how to make services more accessible to them.

Ambitious about Autism delivered the training in partnership with City College Norwich. By the end of the first year, 1,250 employees received training across 50 sessions.



Autism confidence in the community

We've continued to work with many organisations to develop new initiatives to help them be more autism inclusive.

We advised Eurostar on making travel a more comfortable experience for people with autism. As a result, Eurostar launched a virtual guide to support people with autism, many of whom prefer to see information in advance of travelling. This was cited as a first for the travel industry.

Following a year-long project in partnership with the Postal Museum, the first 'Post Early: Relaxed mornings at The Postal Museum' events were held in the summer of 2019. With support from members of our Youth Council, the museum developed a range of resources, to support young autistic visitors before and during their visit. More Post Early events are planned for the future.

Autism confident employers

The sad reality is that the move from education to employment is difficult for many autistic young people. Yet, there is strong evidence of the competitive advantages of a neurodiverse workforce. Here are just some of the skills people with autism have to offer:

- attention to detail
- creativity
- persistence
- loyalty
- hyperfocus
- the ability to think differently – visually, spatially and laterally.

Despite this, 72% of employers say they have not built neurodiversity into their inclusion policies, and too few neurodivergent people are managing to find employment and thrive in the workplace.

We want more professionals and education providers to be autism confident and will continue to provide support for more employers across the UK through our successful employment programmes (see pages 37-38).



Everyone was so welcoming. I felt quite positive for my son's future. When I saw how the young people were running the project, it was obviously important to the museum. It's important to me, too, that Henry has role models, and those young people showed me that. We've never had that anywhere else. Made me feel like it was a community event, catered for us – a typical day out. When we were there, we felt like we were at home. We were amongst friends. We were comfortable. You can't explain that feeling of belonging.]]

Parent feedback on Post Early at the Postal Museum, London

A fulfilling and rewarding future

What's the purpose of education if it doesn't prepare young people to thrive as adults, secure independence and develop their employability skills?

Evidence shows that the challenges preventing young people with autism from making the successful move from education to employment are immense. Only 16% of adults with autism are currently in full-time paid employment. Crucially, there's a lack of specialist careers advice and work experience tailored to their needs. All young people deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential beyond formal education.

We want more children and young people with autism to be empowered to influence decisions about their lives as a result of our work.

As part of 'We need an education' we called for adequate post-16 specialist provision for young people with autism to pursue their goals. This includes better careers advice and pathways into employment through work experience and autism-confident employers.

Autism Exchange

Our award-winning Autism Exchange programme provides support for young people to prepare them for the workplace. Through the programme we provide careers advice and paid work experience for young people, as well as training for employers. This year, more than 140 young people benefitted from support as part of Autism Exchange. Of those in a placement lasting eight weeks or more, 100% secured contract extensions or permanent roles.

We have worked in partnership with the Civil Service since Autism Exchange started in 2015. Since then we've expanded our work with an increasing number of strategic partners.

Employ Autism

In 2019 we officially launched a new programme, Employ Autism, at an event at the House of Lords. This new programme will build on the success of Autism Exchange on a national scale.

Employ Autism will break down the barriers to employment for young people with autism across the country by supporting them to make the transition to employment. Through the Employ Autism network, we will create local partnerships in six areas across England over three years.

We will create a sustainable model to provide careers advice and work experience for young people, as well as training for employers, educators, charities and public sector organisations.

Through Employ Autism we will give young people with autism across the country a fighting chance to gain employment, change ingrained and outdated systems and transform the lives of a generation.

Thanks to the generous support of Pears Foundation, we were able to start the groundwork for this innovative new programme, which will start with two Employ Autism networks in Birmingham and Manchester in 2019-20.



Fundraising Our Ambitious supporters

To each and every one of you, we say a heartfelt ‘thank you’.

Thanks to our supporters, partners and donors, we raised an incredible £1.98 million this year. In a challenging financial environment, it is all the more impressive that thanks to your generosity, we can continue to work towards better outcomes for children and young people with autism. It is only because of you that we can do what we do.

Donate to Ambitious about Autism

We're ambitious about autism. To realise the dreams we share as a community, we need money, support and resources. There are lots of ways to support us, whatever you can do will help us get closer to a world where the ordinary is possible for children and young people with autism.

Find out more at
ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/donate

Strategic partners

We are proud to work in partnership with a number of organisations who share our ambition to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Pears Foundation

For the past 14 years Pears Foundation and Ambitious about Autism have worked in partnership to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

This year, thanks to the generosity of Pears Foundation, we've been able to establish

Employ Autism and use the learnings from our pioneering Autism Exchange model to influence practice on a nationwide scale.

We remain forever grateful to the Foundation for sharing our vision and striving to make this a reality.

Pears
Foundation

TalkTalk

We are proud to be the charity partner of TalkTalk Telecom Group. Together, we have raised more than £4.5 million for Ambitious about Autism.

TalkTalk supports us in many important ways, through governance support, campaign development, telephony assistance, participation in Autism Exchange and support in developing our new Employ Autism network programme.

But the jewel in this partnership crown is the wonderful Night of Ambition – a sparkling gala event and the biggest fundraiser in our calendar. We are immensely grateful to TalkTalk and look forward to working together to take this partnership from strength to strength.

TalkTalk
Group

Joseph Levy Foundation

This year, we were delighted to begin a new, transformative partnership with the Joseph Levy Foundation. With the Foundation's support, we have been able to kick-start a three-year programme to develop our pioneering Ambitious Approach to education for children and young people with autism. In this first year, the Foundation has enabled us to develop and test this model within our own schools and college, and to develop a robust guidance and competency framework.

We have already seen a tremendous impact on our own services. This simply would not have been possible without the backing and friendship of the Foundation.



Rapha

In 2014, Simon Mottram, Rapha's CEO and founder, created a 220-mile cycling challenge, which has since raised £1.2 million for Ambitious about Autism. We're also proud to have Simon and Lucy Mottram's support as two of our ambassadors.

Ambitious about Autism's financial year always begins and ends with a Rapha event, and 2018–19 was no exception. This year, our amazing cyclists rode 220 miles through the night from London to Manchester. It was a formidable feat, even for those who took our first relay option, and was for many the challenge of a lifetime.

Rapha

Huge thanks to our proud partners and supporters

Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation
TalkTalk Group plc
The Joseph Levy Foundation
Rapha Racing Ltd

Ambitious supporters

Charlotte Grobien
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson
Chapman Charitable Trust
Credit Agricole CIB
Civil Service
Comic Relief
David Astor
Department for Education
Deutsche Bank
Sir Charles and Celia Dunstone
Glendower Preparatory School
Graham and Susan Tobbell
Hornsey Parochial Charities
Koral Anderson
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant
John Laing Charitable Trust
Lansdowne Partners
MariaMarina Foundation
Martyn Craddock
Matt Davis and Eliza Mishcon
Mishcon Family Charitable Trust
M/Six

Neil Goulden
Nick Hornby
Nick Howarth
P F Charitable Trust
PIMCO Foundation
Prospero World
QBE Europe Operations Foundation
Rather Be Cycling
Rotary Club of Radlett
Sarah Yamani and Prof. Dr. Malik R. Dahlan
Simon Hillson
Simon and Lucy Mottram
Snowbility
The&Partnership
The Beatrice Laing Trust
The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation
The Clothworkers' Foundation
The Edith Lilian Harrison 2000 Foundation
The Foyle Foundation
The Garfield Weston Foundation
The Harebell Centenary Fund
The Health Foundation (PPP)
The Ironmongers' Company Charitable Trust
The Lawson Trust
The Red Brick Road
The Rayne Foundation
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Tristia Harrison and Andrew Harrison
Universities Superannuation Scheme
Virginia Bovell



Our plans for the future

In 2019–20, as we embark upon the final year of our [Ambitious Futures strategy](#), we have more far-reaching plans. While we know there will be an impact as a result of COVID-19, we will continue to manage risks and put mitigations in place as needed.

Ready for school

We will research, design and deliver early years resources. We've already made a start with the launch in early 2020 of:

- 'Right from the Start', a toolkit for families of young children who suspect their child may have autism.

Achieving at school

We will seek to extend our role in providing services to school-age children and influence schools more widely. We will:

- maintain and develop our high-quality education at TreeHouse School, The Rise School and The Rise Sixth Form
- increase our pupil and learner numbers in line with agreed targets for each service, taking into account the impact of COVID-19. Through the use of technology and digital platforms, we can continue to support our pupils and learners
- ensure 95% of pupils and learners in our education provision achieve their expected progress level
- develop our pupil and learner voice and share best practice

- expand our multi-academy trust, by opening new schools and providing support to other schools
- continue to develop the Autism Education Trust, our networks and collaboration with partners
- embed the Ambitious Approach across all services and put its principles at the heart of what we do.

Preparing for adulthood

We will seek to develop our post-16 work for young people with autism. We will:

- continue to develop and grow Ambitious College
- open our first supported internship
- develop Employ Autism to support more young people make the successful move from education to employment.

Building a community of support

We will develop our information, participation, training, support and policy work, doing more to make sure those with autism are heard loud and clear. We will:

- provide a family support and information service in our schools and Ambitious College to develop opportunities for young people with autism aged 19–25
- continue our 'We need an education' work
- continue to develop the Ambitious Youth Network and Youth Council
- develop an online information programme
- continue to provide training to professionals and work in partnership with a range of organisations such as AET and PBS Alliance to promote good practice and share knowledge and skills.

Building the evidence

We will build evidence of the quality of our work and its outcomes. We will:

- evaluate our Ambitious Approach
- evaluate the Employ Autism programme.

Developing our organisational capacity

We will develop and align our people, culture, infrastructure, systems and processes to support delivery of our strategic aims. We will:

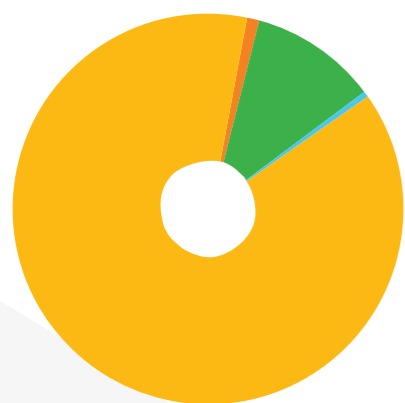
- explore new fundraising opportunities to expand our reach and develop new sources of income
- develop a supporter care strategy to ensure that those who come into contact with us and our services have the best experience possible
- increase our focus on effective staff engagement and ensure this is linked closely to the principles of the Ambitious Approach
- develop our approach to learning, development and talent management for our staff
- develop our new five-year strategy to launch during the year ending 31 August 2021, in consultation with our children and young people, parents and families, staff and stakeholders.



Financial review

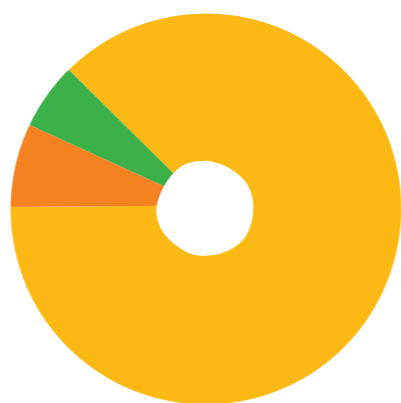
Our total income for the year was £18.8m and our overall expenditure was £18.2m, giving us a net income of £0.6m for the year. Taking into account net gains on our investment and our pension position, there was a positive net movement in funds of £0.4m, taking net assets at 31 August 2019 to £14.8m compared with net assets of £14.4m at 31 August 2018.

Income
£18.8 million



- Income:
- **£16.5m**
Charitable activities: education services
 - **£0.2m**
Charitable activities: external affairs
 - **£2m**
Gifts and donated service
 - **£0.1m**
Investments

Expenditure
£18.2 million



- How our money was spent:
- **£16m**
Charitable activities: education services
 - **£1.2**
Charitable activities: external affairs
 - **£1m**
Raising Funds

This strong financial performance was as a result of the growth in learner and pupil numbers at Ambitious College, TreeHouse School and The Rise School, as well as the generosity of our funders and supporters. The refurbishment of The Rise Sixth Form was completed in the summer of 2019.

In line with this positive financial performance our year free reserves were £2.4m, building a necessary platform from which to carry out our ambitious growth plans for 2019–20 and beyond.

During the year the charity invested in leasehold improvements of £0.3m, furniture and equipment of £0.1m and computer equipment of £0.2m.

The investment portfolio performed to benchmark during the period and was valued at £1.8m as at 31 August 2019.

Investment policy

In July 2019, the Board of Trustees approved the charity’s investment policy. It aims to produce the best financial return within an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least annually. The Trustees have set a target return of inflation (CPI) + 3%, averaged over three to five years, which was achieved in the year.

Savings accounts with Nationwide were opened during 2018–19 to maximise returns on cash held by the charity.

Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds, designated funds and any parts of unrestricted funds not readily available such as long-term 2018–19 term fixed assets. At Ambitious about Autism we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure, or unprecedented events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the Trustees annually and was last reviewed in November 2019.

Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the Trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.7m and £2.5m. As at 31 August 2019, free reserves were £2.4m. The Trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £5.2m as at 31 August 2019. These are:

- fixed assets that totalled £4.3m
- **Cyclical Maintenance Fund** – a sinking fund, based upon projected 30-year life-cycle costs, established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education, had a balance of £0.8m as at 31 August 2019
- **School Development Fund** – a designated fund created in 2013 for broader school development had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2019

- **Transformation Fund** – a designated fund created in 2019 to support the development of the Ambitious Futures strategy 2020–2025 and its implementation had a balance of £0.1m as at 31 August 2019.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events such as COVID-19; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including set-up of The Rise Sixth Form.

Funds balances as at 31 August 2019 totalled £6.6m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £1.4m of restricted funds, a £1.2m pension liability and £6.3m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2019, excluding the pension deficit, totalled £7.7m.

The COVID-19 pandemic has potential financial implications in the short and medium term in terms of pupil and learner placements and support, fundraising and development work. These potential financial implications have been modelled to ensure that risks are being mitigated. As a result of this, and the work that has been undertaken to ensure liquidity, the Trustees consider that Ambitious about Autism remains a going concern.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees, which was reviewed and updated in November 2019.

The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced or taken
- take appropriate action to manage those risks, where possible and cost effectively
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Scrutiny and Audit Committee (SAC) and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood, impact and the organisation’s attitude to that risk. The changes to risks are reviewed quarterly by the SAC and Board, together with actions taken or proposed to manage them.

The table opposite identifies the four key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

Risk

Mitigation

1 COVID-19 pandemic:

That the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic adversely effects our operations and negatively impacts on our financial position including cash-flow.

Our COVID-19 response team including the Executive Leadership Team are carefully managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and through risk mitigation and forward planning are minimising the negative impact on the charity.

2 Learner and pupil numbers:

Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts on our ability to plan.

To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can proactively manage admissions. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents through the admissions process. We also host a number of Open Days to maximise opportunities for parents and commissioners to see our services first hand.

3 Fundraising:

Our ability to operate and grow as set out in our strategy depends upon our ability to fundraise, which, in turn, we depend on for other income-generating projects across Ambitious about Autism.

We are working hard to ensure our existing partners are well supported and to spread the word with new partners.

4 Recruitment and retention:

The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.

Our staff are critical to our services. In order to recruit and retain staff, we have invested in a dedicated recruitment team that supports this critical area of work in a time of organisational growth. To retain staff, we look to develop and articulate career paths, and make available to staff a programme of skills and knowledge management development topics. We have an annual staff survey to gather staff views and develop an action plan for making Ambitious about Autism a better place to work.

Our approach to fundraising

Fundraising practices

Meeting the highest fundraising standards is essential to retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

Ambitious about Autism pays the voluntary levy to be registered with the Fundraising Regulator, and we take care to ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Institute of Fundraising. We maintain up-to-date policies for Fundraising Code of Conduct, Compliments and Complaints and Whistleblowing, and ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies. Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations, annually.

Our privacy policy continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites. We also ensure that we are General Data Protection Regulation compliant.

In the period under review, there have been no instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice. Likewise, no complaints have been received by us regarding fundraising activities.

As a charity set up to protect and champion vulnerable people, it is important that these values are echoed in our fundraising. Our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny on the part of the Executive Leadership Team and transparency with donors ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on a person to give money or other property.

Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals with an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners. The remainder is raised through community members carrying out fundraising activities of their own volition; individuals who participate in established sporting events such as the Virgin Money London Marathon, employee-led corporate partnerships and individuals making ad hoc or regular donations.

Ambitious about Autism partners with corporate organisations, TalkTalk and Rapha, to deliver two major events: Night of Ambition and the London to Manchester cycle ride. TalkTalk sells tickets for Night of Ambition and assists with auction items.

However, all collateral material for the event and all fundraising activities are designed and closely monitored by the Ambitious about Autism team, ensuring that every aspect of the event meets the high fundraising standards we set for ourselves. Rapha leads on the recruitment of cyclists for London to Manchester, but all fundraising activities are again designed and delivered by Ambitious about Autism.

In addition, we use the services of online fundraising platforms, JustGiving, VirginMoneyGiving, BTDonate and Givergy, which we review on an annual basis to ensure compliance and high standards.

Due to the increasingly challenging fundraising environment and the diversification of the fundraising strategy, fundraising expenditure is higher, as a result of additional investments being made to set the foundation for our fundraising work in the future, to ensure opportunities are grasped and to ensure we can continue to be proactive as ever.

We do not engage through face-to-face or telephone direct marketing; our regular giving programme is largely conducted with our close community, with one small Christmas appeal to a limited data set; we conduct no street or public site collections; and we have no mass participation activities in place.



Our structures

Governance

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 25 May 1997 (company number 3375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association. Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a multi-academy trust and company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297) to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The members of the company are Ambitious about Autism, the Chair of Ambitious about Autism, the Chair of the Trust and the Chief Executive. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law.

Both Boards of Trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one away day with the Executive Leadership Team each year.

The Boards also have a number of sub-committees:

- The Scrutiny and Audit Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reporting internal controls and risk management for Ambitious about Autism. The Finance and Resources Committee performs the same role for the Trust.
- The Remuneration Committee reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Executive Leadership Team and staff across the charity and Trust. It meets termly.
- The Governance Committee oversees governance planning and policy for the charity and Trust and trustee renewal, support and review. It meets termly.
- The Investment Committee monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets at least twice per year.

- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education services. It also oversees the Governing Bodies and advisory groups in each service.
- All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School and Ambitious College are examined by their Governing Bodies. The Rise School has two sub-committees: Pupil, Parent, Wellbeing and Engagement; and Quality. The Governing Bodies and sub-committees are chaired by Trustees, among them Governors and members who are not Trustees who perform the roles required.

Management of the charity and Trust is delegated to the Chief Executive, who is the Accounting Officer for the Trust, and the Executive Leadership Team. They attend Board and sub-committee meetings.

During 2018–19 a review of our governance arrangements was carried out and as a result changes to our governance are being put in place with effect from 13 December 2019.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council is comprised of 15 autistic young people aged 16–25. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees.

Trustee recruitment, induction and training

The aim of the charity and Trust is to build a Board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight. People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and Trust, including the Board of Trustees, the Governing Bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New Trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, Trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months and then ongoing training as required.

Recruitment, induction and appraisal of Trustees are overseen by the Governance Committee.

All Trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note six to the accounts (page 72).

Our people and organisation

Ambitious about Autism and our Trust are committed to being great organisations to work and volunteer for.

Employees

A recent survey showed that 95.7% of staff are proud to be part of Ambitious about Autism.

Our skilled and dedicated staff and volunteers are vital to the delivery of our objectives. It is critical that we attract, motivate, develop and retain staff and volunteers with the right skills, talents and knowledge so we can run the charity as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Our focus this year was to continue to invest in recruitment, development and retention, and ensuring managers have the skills and capabilities to lead and manage to a high standard. In addition to providing high-quality teaching and learning, this year we embarked on an improvement programme across technology, buildings and management to support our staff. This included launching two new HR systems; supporting continuous performance improvement and a new recruitment portal.

We engage and communicate with staff on a regular basis, using a range of methods, including whole staff and team face-to-

face meetings and briefings, newsletters, senior management team cascades and management meetings. We also run an annual staff survey to allow staff to share their views and ideas.

We have a Staff Council, with representatives from across the organisation. The Council meets regularly so that we can take into account the views of staff when making decisions regarding people, policies and practices, and to contribute to the continuous improvement of the organisation and its working environment. We celebrate and recognise annually our successes as a whole staff team.

We encourage the involvement of staff across the organisation in our performance through a range of activities, including participating in fundraising events and supporting activities and events for our pupils and learners.

All staff joining Ambitious about Autism and the Trust have a comprehensive induction covering our values, plans and policies, including safeguarding, whistleblowing and data protection. We engage and update staff during the year on our performance,

successes and challenges. As part of this process, we discuss our performance, as well as opportunities and risks. We are proud that, across the group, 98.7% of staff understand our vision, mission and values.

Remuneration policy for key management personnel

We have a Remuneration Committee comprising of Trustees and an external expert, who review our total reward strategy for staff and executive pay. The committee meets termly.

Recommendations are made to the Boards of Trustees for approval.

Disability Confident employer

As a charity working to support people with disabilities, we are fully committed to being welcoming and supportive to all staff with disabilities or any other protected characteristic.

Our recruiting staff are trained to ensure potential applicants with disabilities are fully and fairly considered and are supported with relevant adjustments made during the recruitment process, and in the workplace.

We are proud to have achieved Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status. As part of this scheme, we guarantee to interview candidates with a disability

whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role as detailed under the person specification.

We work to ensure that all staff, including those with disabilities, have the right training, career development and promotion opportunities put in place. This process starts at induction and is managed through supervisions and ongoing performance reviews. We have access to advice from Occupational Health support, an on-site physiotherapist and an Employee Assistance Programme to enable us to support any member of staff who becomes disabled during employment. Our wellbeing offer is extensive and we continue to demonstrate our commitment to supporting improved mental health and wellbeing across the organisation.

Keeping data safe

We have always been fully committed to protecting details of all the people we work with and who support us. With the General Data Protection Regulation coming into force on 25 May 2018, we rolled out a plan to ensure we complied with the new law.

We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support children and young people with autism and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 3–19 years and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25 based on their needs. Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service. For example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

The Trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the United Kingdom by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students. The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014.

In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, BILD, Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools, The Association of National Specialist Colleges, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Steering Group of the Special Education Consortium.

Our education provision is co-located at Spring West Academy, West Thames College and the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.

All organisations listed here are independent organisations and their results are not included in the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) is a separate exempt charity.

AaAST is actively considering the development of further schools.

Our leadership and advisers

The Trustees are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 August 2019 was nine (2018: nine). The Trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

Neil Goulden
(Chair)

Lesley Longstone
(Chair of the Education Committee and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Paul Disley-Tindell
(Chair of Remuneration Committee)

Elizabeth Stanton
(Treasurer, Chair of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

Phillippa Stobbs
(Chair of TreeHouse School Governing Body)

Koral Anderson

Jonathan Andrews

Martyn Craddock

Alison Halsey
(appointed 7 October 2019)

Alistair MacCallum
(appointed 7 October 2019)

Charlotte Warner

Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

Lesley Longstone (Chair)

Neil Goulden (Vice Chair)

Jolanta Lasota
(Accounting Officer)

Bruno Paulson
(Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee. Resigned 26 April 2019)

Michael Clark
(appointed 7 October 2019)

Tanith Dodge
(appointed 7 October 2019)

Joanna Healey

Lucy Nutt

Elizabeth Stanton

Charlotte Warner

The Trustees are supported in their work by the President and Vice Presidents who all support the work of our charity.

President

Lord Tim Clement-Jones
CBE

Vice Presidents

Nick Baldwin

Virginia Bovell OBE

Peter Carroll

John Constantine

Katharine Doré OBE

Karen Edwards OBE

Tristia Harrison

Alex Hatter

Richard Hatter

Nick Hornby

Matthew Punshon

Sid Wells

Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers, communications professionals and young people – all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding.

They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns and all work on a voluntary basis. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

- Judith Barnard**
- Prof. Simon Baron Cohen**
- Steve Broach**
- Leo Capella**
- Prof. Tony Charman**
- Prof. Richard Hastings**
- Prof. Pat Howlin**
- Jonathan Meth**
- Emran Mian OBE**
- David Nicholson**
- James Partridge OBE**
- Nick Peacey**
- Dr. Liz Pellicano**
- Mark Schmid**
- Dr. Rowie Shaw**
- Fiona Slomovic**
- Su Thomas**
- Richard Townley**
- Gaby Zein**

Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

- Sarah Cawood**
- Michelle Collins**
- Niamh Cusack**
- Jonny Gould**
- Kathy Lette**
- David Mitchell**
- Simon and Lucy Mottram**
- Jules Robertson**
- Hayley Ronson**
- Jon Snow**
- Luke Treadaway**

Parent Patrons

Our team of Parent Patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism. Our Parent Patrons are:

- Rt Hon John Bercow MP**
(stepped down 31 October 2019)
- Sally Bercow**
(stepped down 31 October 2019)
- Nicky Clark**
- Claire Coombe-Tennant**
- John Coombe-Tennant**

- Matthew Davis**
- Keith Duffy**
- Eliza Mishcon**
- Charlotte Moore**
- Claire Ryan**
- Sophie Walker**

Executive leadership

The Trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership.

- Jolanta Lasota**
Chief Executive
- Vivienne Berkeley**
Executive Principal
- Paul Breckell**
Deputy Chief Executive
- Danae Leaman-Hill**
Director of Fundraising
- Louise Posocco**
Director of Finance and Planning
- Zoe Weaver**
Director of People
- Harry Wilkinson**
Director of Service Development
- Alison Worsley**
Director of External Affairs



Ambassadors Kathy Lette and Jules Robertson

Statement of responsibilities of the Trustees

The Trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' annual report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the Trustees are aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware.

- The Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

In considering going concern, the Trustees have reviewed the reserves, liquidity and financial position of Ambitious about Autism. The COVID-19 pandemic has potential financial implications in the short and medium term in terms of pupil and learner placements and support, fundraising and development work. These financial implications have been modelled to ensure that risks are being mitigated. As a result of this, and the work that has been undertaken to ensure liquidity, the Trustees consider that Ambitious about Autism remains a going concern.

The report of the Trustees, which includes the strategic report, has been approved by the Trustees on 2 April 2020 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiary (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2019, which comprise: the consolidated statement of financial activities; the group and parent charitable company balance sheets; and the consolidated statement of cash flows and the notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and of the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2019 and of the group's incoming resources and

application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended

- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the group financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities

in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the group financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Trustees have not disclosed in the group financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the group's or the parent charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least 12 months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The Trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, other than the group financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the group financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the group financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the group

financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the group financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements
- the Trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' annual report, including the strategic report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the

Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of Trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out in the Trustees' annual report, the Trustees (who are also the directors of the parent charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and the parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the group or the parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed auditor under the Companies Act 2006 and section 151 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with those Acts.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal control.

- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the group's or the parent charitable company's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the group's or the parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the group or the parent charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the group to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. We are

responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Helen Elliott
Senior statutory auditor

Date: 2 April 2020
for and on behalf of Sayer Vincent LLP,
Statutory Auditor
Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane,
LONDON, EC1Y 0TL

Sayer Vincent LLP is eligible to act as auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006

Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2019

	For the year ended 31 August 2019						For the year ended 31 August 2018	
	Note	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000	Total £'000	
		Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-Total £'000	Restricted £'000			
Income from:								
Donations and legacies:								
Gifts and donated services	2	909	930	1,839	136	1,975	2,171	
Charitable activities:								
Educational services	3	12,875	120	12,995	3,547	16,542	14,138	
External affairs	3	-	101	101	-	101	61	
Training and Consultancy		60	33	93	-	93	40	
Investments:		66	-	66	-	66	52	
Total income		13,910	1,184	15,094	3,683	18,777	16,462	
Expenditure on:								
Raising funds								
Fundraising activities		952	-	952	-	952	761	
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	12	14	
		964	-	964	-	964	775	
Charitable activities:								
Educational services		12,184	809	12,993	3,048	16,041	13,472	
External affairs		813	350	1,163	-	1,163	977	
Total expenditure	4	13,961	1,159	15,120	3,048	18,168	15,224	
Net income before other gains		(51)	25	(26)	635	609	1,238	
Net gains on investments		53	-	53	-	53	4	
Net gain/(loss) on pension deficit		-	-	-	(312)	(312)	253	
Net income for the year	5	2	25	27	323	350	1,495	
Transfers between funds	18	543	(189)	354	(354)	-	-	
Net movement in funds	18	545	(164)	381	(31)	350	1,495	
Reconciliation of funds:								
Total funds brought forward		7,088	698	7,786	6,597	14,383	12,888	
Total funds carried forward	18	7,633	534	8,167	6,566	14,733	14,383	

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 18a to the financial statements.

Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2019

	Note	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
		31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	10	17,281	17,517	10,858	11,197
Investments	11	1,750	1,710	1,750	1,710
		19,031	19,227	12,608	12,907
Current assets:					
Debtors	12	867	703	765	648
Cash at bank and in hand		2,414	3,973	1,335	2,439
Short-term deposits		1,504	-	1,002	-
		4,785	4,676	3,102	3,087
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(2,932)	(3,510)	(2,574)	(2,861)
Net current assets/(liabilities)		1,853	1,166	528	226
Total assets less current liabilities		20,884	20,393	13,136	13,133
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	15	(4,969)	(5,347)	(4,969)	(5,347)
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	16	(1,182)	(663)	-	-
Total net assets	17	14,733	14,383	8,167	7,786
Funds					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		534	698	534	698
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		6,566	6,597	-	-
Total restricted funds		7,100	7,295	534	698
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		5,219	5,222	5,219	5,222
General funds		2,414	1,866	2,414	1,866
Total unrestricted funds		7,633	7,088	7,633	7,088
Total Funds	18	14,733	14,383	8,167	7,786

Approved by the Trustees on 2 April 2020 and signed on their behalf by

Neil Goulden

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2019

	For the year ended 31 August 2019		For the 17 month period to 31 August 2018	
	Note	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net cash provided by operating activities	19	966		2,766
Cash flows from investing activities				
Dividends, interest and rents from investments		66		52
Interest payable		(113)		(100)
Purchase of fixed assets		(616)		(465)
Proceeds from the sale of investments		192		107
Change on cash held for investment		(56)		54
Purchase of investments		(123)		(148)
Net cash used in investing activities		(650)		(500)
Cash flows from financing activities				
Repayments of borrowing		(371)		(381)
Net cash used in financing activities		(371)		(381)
Change in cash and cash equivalents		(55)		1,885
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		3,973		2,088
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		3,918		3,973
Cash and cash equivalents consists of				
Cash at bank and in hand		2,414		3,973
Short-term deposits		1,504		-
		3,918		3,973

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in the United Kingdom. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

b. Basis of consolidation

The consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2019 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d. Going concern

The Trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period (See pages 59 – 60).

e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services, and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provide a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

1. Accounting policies (continued)

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment and software	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3-10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

m. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities. The group does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

n. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

o. Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

p. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits includes liquid investments with a maturity of three to twelve months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

q. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

The group only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

r. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of Auto Enrolment with a deferred period of 3 months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi-employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 16.

The pension costs charged in the Statement of Financial Activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the Trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate Trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

2. Income from donations and legacies

	For the year ended 31 August 2019				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-total £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Gifts	853	928	1,781	136	1,917
Donated services	56	2	58	-	58
	909	930	1,839	136	1,975

	For the year ended 31 August 2018				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-total £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Training and consultancy					
Gifts	788	1,310	2,098	34	2,132
Donated services	39	-	39	-	39
	827	1,310	2,137	34	2,171

3. Income from charitable activities

	For the year ended 31 August 2019				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-total £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Local authorities	11,168	24	11,192	2,649	13,841
Education Skills Funding Agency	1,707	96	1,803	898	2,701
Sub-total for Educational services	12,875	120	12,995	3,547	16,542
Autism Education Trust	-	101	101	-	101
Sub-total for External affairs	-	101	101	-	101
Total income from charitable activities	12,875	221	13,096	3,547	16,643

	For the year ended 31 August 2018				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-total £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Local authorities	9,692	17	9,709	2,289	11,998
Education Skills Funding Agency	1,356	73	1,429	711	2,140
Sub-total for Educational services	11,048	90	11,138	3,000	14,138
Autism Education Trust	-	61	61	-	61
Sub-total for External affairs	-	61	61	-	61
Total income from charitable activities	11,048	151	11,199	3,000	14,199

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 7) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human Resources £'000	Information Technology £'000	Premises and Office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	447	394	-	-	-	8	-	99	16	964
Educational services	7,899	1,029	-	-	-	477	-	3,339	249	12,993
External affairs	681	285	-	-	-	19	-	145	33	1,163
Total costs before allocation of support and governance costs	9,027	1,708	-	-	-	504	-	3,583	298	15,120
Support costs	1,360	150	806	565	161	520	21	(3,583)	-	-
Governance costs	214	22	-	-	-	-	62	-	(298)	-
Sub-total Ambitious about Autism costs	1,574	172	806	565	161	520	83	(3,583)	(298)	-
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,097	781	-	-	-	170	-	-	-	3,048
Training and consultancy										
Total expenditure	12,698	2,661	806	565	161	1,194	83	-	-	18,168

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All AaAST support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation, any other costs are allocated directly to AaAST.

	Staff costs (note 7) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human Resources £'000	Information Technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2018 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	349	315	-	-	-	18	-	88	5	775
Educational services	6,890	391	-	-	-	487	-	2,855	217	10,840
External affairs	547	287	-	-	-	23	-	111	9	977
Total costs before allocation of support and governance costs	7,786	993	-	-	-	528	-	3,054	231	12,592
Support costs	1,126	203	489	315	345	549	27	(3,054)	-	-
Governance costs	211	19	-	-	-	-	1	-	(231)	-
Sub-total Ambitious about Autism costs	1,337	222	489	315	345	549	28	(3,054)	(231)	-
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	1,693	800	-	-	-	139	-	-	-	2,632
Total expenditure 2018	10,816	2,015	489	315	345	1,216	28	-	-	15,224

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

5. Net income for the period

This is stated after charging:

	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2018 £'000
Depreciation	852	744
Interest payable	113	100
Auditor's remuneration (excluding VAT):		
Audit	26	28
Other services	4	3
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	103	100
Equipment	14	41

6. Analysis of group staff costs, Trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2018 £'000
Salaries and wages	11,056	9,446
Social security costs	990	855
Employer's contribution to pension schemes	652	515
	12,698	10,816

The following number of employees received salary and employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) during the year to 31 August 2019, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2018 £'000
£60,000-£69,999	3	1
£70,000-£79,999	4	3
£80,000-£89,999	3	4
£90,000-£99,999	3	2
£100,000-£109,999	3	1
£110,000-£119,999	0	0
£120,000-£129,999	1	0
£130,000-£139,999	0	1
£140,000-£149,999	0	0
£150,000-£159,999	1	0

The number of higher earners has increased from 2017/18 due to the planned strengthening and development of the management team in light of the charity's ongoing growth strategy.

The total salary and employee benefits including pension and National Insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £950,117 for the year to 31 August 2019 (2018: £917,015).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious about Autism, was paid an annual salary of £111,100 to 31 August 2019 (2018: £110,000). The highest paid person was not the Chief Executive.

The charity Trustees were not paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2018: £nil). No charity Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2018: £nil).

Trustees did not claim any expenses for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs in 2019 (2018: £169, two members).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

7. Staff numbers

The average number of employees (headcount based on number of staff employed) during the period was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2019 No.	For the year ended 31 August 2018 No.
Raising funds	11	9
Educational services	364	328
External affairs	18	13
Support	33	32
	426	382

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across education services, as well as growth in the Right from the Start (see note 18) and Communications team.

8. Related party transactions

Some members of the Board of Trustees are parents of children attending TreeHouse School. The places are funded in the same way as all other places at the school and the children receive the same service and benefits as other children.

The charity purchased £9,492 of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the reporting period. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, Executive Principal. At the balance sheet date nothing (2018:£773) was owed to Assman Office Furniture.

Charlotte Warner, a Trustee of the charity, is also a director of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Spring West Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with the Spring West Academy with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust made payments totalling £54k (2018: £59k) to the Spring West Academy.

The Vice Chair of Ambitious about Autism and Chair of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Lesley Longstone was employed by the Department for Education but was seconded to the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Crown Prosecution Service. During the year, no income had been received from the Department for Education (2018: £nil); however, the Group did receive grant income totalling £2,701k (2018: £2,140k) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, an executive agency sponsored by the Department of Education.

During the reporting period Trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £40,175 (2018: £23,425) to the charity. None of the donations were restricted.

9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment and software £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost							
At the start of the period	11,741	6,550	1,473	464	1,149	132	21,509
Additions in the period	29	-	255	92	216	24	616
At the end of the period	11,770	6,550	1,728	556	1,365	156	22,125
Depreciation							
At the start of the period	2,296	320	210	309	735	122	3,992
Charge for the period	267	132	162	65	218	8	852
At the end of the period	2,563	452	372	374	953	130	4,844
Net book value							
At the end of the period	9,207	6,098	1,356	182	412	26	17,281
At the start of the period	9,445	6,230	1,263	155	414	10	17,517

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment and software £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At the start of the period	11,741	1,473	359	957	132	14,662
Additions in the period	29	107	33	144	24	337
At the end of the period	11,770	1,580	392	1,101	156	14,999
Depreciation						
At the start of the period	2,296	210	267	570	122	3,465
Charge for the period	267	162	38	201	8	676
At the end of the period	2,563	372	305	771	130	4,141
Net book value						
At the end of the period	9,207	1,208	87	330	26	10,858
At the start of the period	9,445	1,263	92	387	10	11,197

Land with a cost of £834,000 (2018: £834,000) is included within freehold land and buildings and is not depreciated. The long leasehold refers to The Rise School building.

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

11. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2019	31 August 2018
	£'000	£'000
Market value at the start of the period	1,678	1,633
Additions at cost	123	148
Disposal proceeds	(192)	(107)
Net gain on change in fair value	53	4
Market value at the end of the period	1,662	1,678
Cash held in investments	88	32
Total investments held	1,750	1,710

Investments comprise:	31 August 2019	31 August 2018
	£'000	£'000
Listed securities		
Fixed interest	279	244
Direct UK equities	594	650
Direct overseas equities	567	564
Alternatives - property and managed funds	222	220
Cash held for re-investment	79	21
Cash	9	11
Total investments held	1,750	1,710

12. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000
Trade debtors	322	209	347	221
Other debtors	139	76	19	27
Prepayments	296	350	292	346
Accrued income	110	68	107	54
	867	703	765	648

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

13. Creditors: amounts falling due within one period

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000
Bank loans	378	371	378	371
Trade creditors	389	224	305	163
Taxation and social security	342	249	311	231
Other creditors	120	494	154	414
Accruals	599	527	348	506
Deferred income (note 14)	1,104	1,645	1,078	1,176
	2,932	3,510	2,574	2,861

14. Deferred income

Deferred income comprises fees received in advance:	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the period	1,176	966	1,176	966
Amount released to income in the period	(1,176)	(966)	(1,176)	(966)
Amount deferred in the period	1,104	1,645	1,078	1,176
Balance at the end of the year	1,104	1,645	1,078	1,176

Deferred income as at 31 August 2019 relates to autumn 2019 term fees that were received in advance of the new school year.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

15. Creditors: amounts falling due after one year

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2018 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	3,638	3,929
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,331	1,418
Balance at the end of the period	4,969	5,347

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years. Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the Bank of England base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from National Westminster Bank Plc, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	1-2 years £'000	2-5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	251	780	1,783
NatWest £1.1m tranche	47	169	609
NatWest £1.9m tranche	89	279	962
Balance at the end of the year	387	1,228	3,354

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

16. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, The People's Pension and into one employee's pension scheme. Both Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust pay into the Teachers Pension Scheme.

Contributions to these schemes were £652k (2018: £515k).

Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

Not less than every four years the Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2016 and in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 5 March 2019. The key elements of the valuation and subsequent consultation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 23.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration charge);
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £218,100 million, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100 million giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000 million;
- an employer cost cap of 10.9% of pensionable pay will be applied to future valuations; and
- the assumed real rate of return is 2.4% in excess of prices and 2% in excess of earnings. The rate of real earnings growth is assumed to be 2.2%. The assumed nominal rate of return is 4.45%.

The TPS valuation for 2016 determined an employer rate of 23.68%, which is payable from September 2019. The next valuation of the TPS will be as at March 2020, whereupon the employer contribution rate is expected to be reassessed and will be payable from 1 September 2023.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaA in the period amounted to £162k (2018: £133k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaAST in the period amounted to £85k (2018: £78k).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

22 AaA employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2019 (2018: 18).

13 AaAST employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2019 (2018: 10).

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2019 were £220k (2018: £169k), of which employer's contributions totalled £161k (2018: £128k) and employees' contributions totalled £59k (2018: £45k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2019 employee primary contribution rates were between 5.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent of pensionable salary. The agreed contribution rates for future years are 14.4 per cent for employers, and for employees a minimum of 5.5 per cent to a maximum of 12.5 per cent of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2019 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50 per cent of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

48 employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2019 (2018: 38).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

16. Pension scheme (continued)

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2019		At 31 August 2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.65%		3.80%	
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.15%		2.30%	
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	1.90%		2.70%	
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.15%		2.30%	
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00%		50.00%	

Sensitivity analysis	£'000		£'000	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
Adjustment to discount rate	0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	
Present value of total obligation	1,835	1,908	1,984	
Projected service cost	418	435	452	
Adjustment to long term salary increase	0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	
Present value of total obligation	1,908	1,908	1,908	
Projected service cost	435	435	435	
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%	
Present value of total obligation	1,984	1,908	1,835	
Projected service cost	452	435	419	
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	+ 1 Year	None	- 1 Year	
Present value of total obligation	1,974	1,908	1,844	
Projected service cost	450	435	420	

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2019		At 31 August 2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Retiring today				
Males	20.6		21.5	
Females	24		25.2	
Retiring in 20 years				
Males	22.3		23.7	
Females	25.8		27.5	

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

16. Pension scheme (continued)

The estimated asset allocation as at 31 August 2018 is as follows:

	31 August 2019		31 August 2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Equities	446	61%	287	61%
Gilts	39	5%	23	5%
Other bonds	65	9%	37	8%
Property	34	5%	23	5%
Absolute return funds	129	18%	85	18%
Cash	13	2%	11	2%
Total market value of assets	726	100%	466	100%
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	(1,908)		(1,129)	
Deficit in the scheme	(1,182)		(663)	

The group's share of the assets of the fund is less than 1%.

The actual return on scheme assets was £42,000 (2018: £14,000).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2019		31 August 2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Current service cost (net of employee contributions)	(353)		(332)	
Net interest cost	(15)		(16)	
Total operating charge	(368)		(348)	

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2019		2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
At 1 September	1,129		975	
Current service cost	353		332	
Interest cost	31		26	
Actuarial loss / (gain)	338		(249)	
Benefits paid	(2)		-	
Employee contributions	59		45	
At 31 August	1,908		1,129	

Changes in the market value of the group's share of scheme assets:	2019		2018	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
At 1 September	466		283	
Interest on assets	16		10	
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	26		4	
Employer contributions	161		124	
Employee contributions	59		45	
Benefits paid	(2)		-	
At 31 August	726		466	

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

17. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2019 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,858	-	6,423	17,281
Investments	1,750	-	-	-	1,750
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	1,325	1,853
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	(1,182)	(6,151)
	2,414	5,219	534	6,566	14,733

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Training and consultancy	-	-	-	-
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,858	-	10,858
Investments	1,750	-	-	1,750
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	528
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	(4,969)
	2,414	5,219	534	8,167

Fund balances as at 31 August 2018 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	11,197	-	6,320	17,517
Investments	1,710	-	-	-	1,710
Net current assets / (liabilities)	156	(628)	698	940	1,166
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,347)	-	(663)	(6,010)
	1,866	5,222	698	6,597	14,383

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	11,197	-	11,197
Investments	1,710	-	-	1,710
Net current assets / (liabilities)	156	(628)	698	226
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,347)	-	(5,347)
	1,866	5,222	698	7,786

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

18a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2019:

	At the start of the period £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the period £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	252	255	(388)	(24)	95
Education Services projects	178	156	(186)	-	148
Autism Exchange	23	120	(119)	-	24
Family Support	8	48	(43)	-	13
Participation	18	145	(70)	-	93
Succeeding at College	-	88	(66)	-	22
TreeHouse School	60	114	(70)	(8)	96
Other	28	231	(216)	-	43
	567	1,157	(1,158)	(32)	534
Capital					
Ambitious College	131	27	(1)	(157)	-
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	698	1,184	(1,159)	(189)	534
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools					
Trust	6,597	3,683	(3,360)	(354)	6,566
Total group restricted funds	7,295	4,867	(4,519)	(543)	7,100
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,631	-	(678)	342	4,295
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	-	-	-	100	100
Cyclical Maintenance Fund	586	-	-	233	819
Total designated funds	5,222	-	(678)	675	5,219
General funds	1,866	13,963	(13,283)	(132)	2,414
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	7,088	13,963	(13,961)	543	7,633
Total group funds	14,383	18,830	(18,480)	-	14,733

Transfers

£276k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year, including the finalisation of the West Thames Ambitious College build, IT equipment for the whole organisation, a vehicle for Ambitious College and works at Whittington Hospital for our supported internship programme. This includes £189k of fixed assets funded from restricted income.

£300k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Cyclical Maintenance Fund for future investment from this fund. £67k was transferred from the Cyclical Maintenance Fund to the Fixed Asset Fund to cover depreciation of various improvements at Pears National Centre during the year.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the School Development fund to support future school developments.

£354k was transferred from AaAST to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to AaAST.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

18a. Movement in funds (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2018:	At the start of the period £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the period £'000
Restricted funds:					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	65	505	(318)	-	252
Autism Exchange	0	79	(56)	-	23
Family Support	21	25	(38)	-	8
MyVoice	45	32	(59)	-	18
Participation	24	48	(72)	-	-
Succeeding at College	-	188	(10)	-	178
TreeHouse School	27	96	(58)	(5)	60
Other	26	99	(41)	(56)	28
	208	1,072	(652)	(61)	567
Capital					
Ambitious College	27	391	-	(287)	131
Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds	235	1,463	(652)	(348)	698
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools					
Trust	6,096	3,287	(2,632)	(154)	6,597
Total group restricted funds	6,331	4,750	(3,284)	(502)	7,295
Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,779	-	(567)	419	4,631
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Cyclical Maintenance Fund	502	-	-	84	586
Total designated funds	5,286	-	(567)	503	5,222
General funds	1,271	11,969	(11,373)	(1)	1,866
Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds	6,557	11,969	(11,940)	502	7,088
Total group funds	12,888	16,719	(15,224)	-	14,383

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

18b. Summary movement in funds

Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first independent specialist day college for young people with complex autism aged 16-25 years. Both campuses are co-located and developed in partnership with another general further education college.
Education Services projects	This fund includes the Ambitious Approach programme develops a competency framework for a way of working that is values driven, person centred, underpinned by PBS and delivered by a transdisciplinary team, to achieve an improved quality of life for children and young people with autism and complex needs. The framework will be piloted in Ambitious about Autism settings and partner schools over three years. It will support schools and colleges with audit tools, implementation guidance and evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials. It also includes Right from the Start, our national programme to examine early years support for children with autism and their parents. The programme will commission a major piece of research to examine the needs of parents, carers and early years professionals, taking into account stress points, barriers and potential interventions to understand what works. The programme will produce a highly accessible information pack for parents, to walk them through the process from the point at which they feel they need to seek advice about diagnosis. The research and toolkit will be used to influence policy and practice.
Autism Exchange	The Autism Exchange programme aims to ensure young people with autism are given the careers advice and work experience they need to prepare them for the work place, and employers have the training and understanding to recruit and support people on the autism spectrum. The programme has developed a unique partnership between young people, employers and post 16 education providers. It is tailored to support young people with autism from across the spectrum, including those with complex needs. Young people can access work placements in all different disciplines, including HR, finance, communications and IT.
Family Support	The family support function sits across our services and aims to secure strong and timely direct advice and support to families and carers of young people through periods of transition, such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood.
Participation	A programme to give young people a direct voice so that all of our work reflects the views and needs of children and young people with autism. Our Youth Council, Youth Patrons and Ambitious Youth Network give opportunities for young people to act as ambassadors for the charity directly influencing policy and decision makers, raising awareness and providing consultancy and training. We believe that better decisions are made and better outcomes achieved when people are involved in decisions made about their lives.
Succeeding at College	Succeeding at College is a project funded by the Department for Education through the Autism Education Trust. It aims to support more young people with autism to continue their education beyond school through engaging more post-16 education providers in a national face-to-face training programme on understanding autism. The project also includes a research component.
Treehouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation Fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's future strategy development and any resultant transformation work that arises.
Cyclical Maintenance fund	The sinking fund has been established to provide for major repairs to the building based on 30 year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

19. Net cash provided by / (used in) group operating activities

	2019 £'000	2018 £'000
Net income	350	1,495
Depreciation charges	852	744
(Gains) on investments	(53)	(4)
Dividends and interest from investments	(66)	(52)
Interest payable	113	100
(Increase) in debtors	(164)	(240)
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	(585)	752
Increase / (decrease) in pension deficit	519	(29)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	966	2,766

20. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2019 £'000	2018 £'000	2019 £'000	2018 £'000
Less than one year	132	100	18	6
One to five years	405	296	22	9
Over five years	431	196	-	-
	968	592	40	15

21. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had non-contractual commitments of £474k (2018: £400k).

22. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

23. Post balance sheet event

The COVID-19 pandemic has created volatile market conditions. As a result, the value of the investment portfolio has reduced to £1,470k as at 30 March 2020 (£1,750k as at 31 August 2019). The Trustees have no current plan to divest any holdings in the investment portfolio.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 8335297).

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted.

Balance Sheet	2019 £'000	2018 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	6,423	6,320
Current Assets		
Debtors	205	133
Cash at bank and in hand	1,079	1,534
Short-term deposit	502	-
	1,786	1,667
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(461)	(727)
Net current (liabilities) / assets	1,325	940
Net assets excluding pension liability	7,748	7,260
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	(1,182)	(663)
Total net assets	6,566	6,597
Funds of the Academy Trust:		
Restricted funds		
Fixed asset fund	6,342	6,032
Restricted income fund	1,406	995
Pension Reserve	(1,182)	(663)
Total restricted funds	6,566	6,364
Unrestricted income funds	-	233
Total Funds	6,566	6,597

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of AaAST SoFA for the reporting period:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	Total £'000
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	4	14	118	136
Charitable activities	-	3,547	-	3,547
	4	3,561	118	3,683
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	68	3,177	157	3,402
Net surplus/(deficit)	(64)	384	(39)	281
Transfer Between Funds	(169)	(180)	349	-
Other recognised gains	-	(312)	-	(312)
Net movement in funds	(233)	(108)	310	(31)
Funds brought forward	233	332	6,032	6,597
Funds carried forward	-	224	6,342	6,566

Services were provided by Ambitious about Autism to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £250k from September 2018 to August 2019 (2018: £154k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at or below cost, and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Rise School. At year end costs accrued, to be paid to Ambitious about Autism were nil (2018: £51k).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2019

25. Prior year statement of financial activities

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

	For the year ended 31 August 2018				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub-Total £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Income from:					
Donations and legacies:					
Gifts and donated services	827	1,310	2,137	34	2,171
Net assets transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust*	-	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities:					
Educational services	11,048	90	11,138	3,000	14,138
External affairs	-	61	61	-	61
Other trading activities:	38	2	40	-	40
Investments:	52	-	52	-	52
Total income	11,965	1,463	13,428	3,034	16,462
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds:					
Fundraising activities	736	25	761	-	761
Investment management costs	14	-	14	-	14
	750	25	775	-	775
Charitable activities:					
Educational services	10,449	391	10,840	2,632	13,472
External affairs	741	236	977	-	977
Total expenditure	11,940	652	12,592	2,632	15,224
Net income/(expenditure) before other gains/ (losses)	25	811	836	402	1,238
Net gains/(losses) on investments	4	-	4	-	4
Net loss on pension deficit	-	-	-	253	253
Net income/(expenditure) for the period	29	811	840	655	1,495
Transfers between and from funds	502	(348)	154	(154)	-
Net movement in funds	531	463	994	501	1,495
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward					
As originally stated	6,557	235	6,792	6,096	12,888
Prior year adjustment	-	-	-	-	-
As restated	6,557	235	6,792	6,096	12,888
Total funds carried forward	7,088	698	7,786	6,597	14,383

Get involved

Join our circle of Ambitious Friends

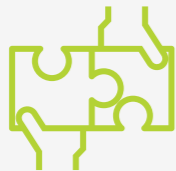


Our Ambitious Friends form the backbone of Ambitious about Autism: making a generous, annual commitment to our work; making the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

We are always looking to increase this special group of our most generous and influential supporters.

The membership is £1,200 (£100 a month), but we are delighted that a number of our Ambitious Friends are kind enough to make five- and six-figure donations.

Partner with us



Nothing we do would be possible without our partners. A lot of people will have a connection to someone with autism or be impacted by autism. There are many ways you can support us. You might want to fund one of our projects, organise an event in aid of Ambitious about Autism or support employees who want to volunteer for us.

Leave us a legacy



By leaving a legacy, you can support the next generation of children with autism.

Donate online



Donate online via our secure website page and make a lasting difference to the lives and futures of children with autism, today.

Campaign with us



We know it's a real challenge that children and young people with autism and their families face.

We campaign to change policy and practice, as we want to make sure all children with autism can get the help they need to succeed at school and achieve their potential as young adults.

Families are the most powerful campaigners of all and we hope you will be inspired to get involved in our campaigning work.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the many ways you can support us, please visit ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/get-involved



Autism touches so many lives – those with it, and the families who care for them. 'Ambitious about Autism' is precisely what its name says, and is relentlessly ambitious for these young people – working tirelessly to ensure they have an equal chance at achieving a meaningful education, access to employment and a brighter future. That's precisely why I am proud to support them.

Jon Snow, Broadcaster and Ambitious about Autism ambassador