



**Ambitious  
about Autism**



# Annual report and accounts

**2019–20**



# Acknowledgements

We would like to say a big thank you to our volunteer editorial board members who contributed to the production of this report.



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# Our story



We are the national charity for children and young people with autism. Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

We are proud of our pioneering approach, which started in 1997 when a group of parents set up the TreeHouse Trust to enable autistic children and young people to access the education they need and deserve. Since then, we have increased our reach and impact across the UK.

Despite our many successes, the sad fact is that children and young people with autism still face a lack of understanding of their needs and the right support. Their worlds have been turned upside down by the coronavirus pandemic, and they need our support now more than ever.

Our priority over the next 12 months will be to support children and young people with autism and their families to manage the impact of this pandemic.

We want to help even more children and young people with autism to improve their quality of life and secure a fulfilling and rewarding future.

## About autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects 1 person in 100 in the UK. Autism affects the way a person communicates and how they experience the world around them.

It is described as a spectrum condition because while people with autism share certain characteristics, they have individual interests, needs and preferences.

Children and young people with autism face enormous challenges due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

Some people with autism can live independent lives, but others may have additional needs, including learning disabilities. Early intervention, education and support are critical if children and young people with autism are to learn, thrive, achieve and lead fulfilling lives.

# Welcome from the Chair of Trustees and Chief Executive



At the time of writing this annual report and accounts, we were still living with the daily reality of the coronavirus pandemic, and the profound effect it was having on children and young people with autism and their families.

Many children and young people with autism, already deeply affected by isolation, anxiety and financial hardship, have struggled to cope. As a result, the need for our services and support is greater now than ever before in our history.

This was the last year of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy. The progress we have made since its publication ensured that we were in a better position to manage the unexpected.

Our charity continued to live up to its name as we achieved so many of our ambitious plans, from the development of our Right from the Start toolkit to the launch of Employ Autism, and our amazing co-production and participation with autistic young people.

Throughout this report, you'll see how we've grown and evolved over the last three years. Through our TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we have directly offered specialist education and support.

As we embark on a new decade, and a new strategy, we are no less determined to achieve our vision: of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

In addition to building on our expertise across education, employment and youth participation, our new strategic plan will address the increased need for support in health and wellbeing, families and relationships and local communities, particularly in these exceptional times.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on our fundraising activities. Our calendar of events – the London Marathon and community fundraising activities and events – was cancelled in line with government guidance. Nevertheless, we were quick to act: soon after the first lockdown in March 2020, we launched our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. We set and exceeded our ambitious target to raise much-needed funds to help us address the crisis that autistic young people and their families were and are still facing.

What we have achieved would not have been possible without you. This year, the support of our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, and generous partners and supporters is appreciated more than ever. No matter how you've contributed, you have been crucial to our mission to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.



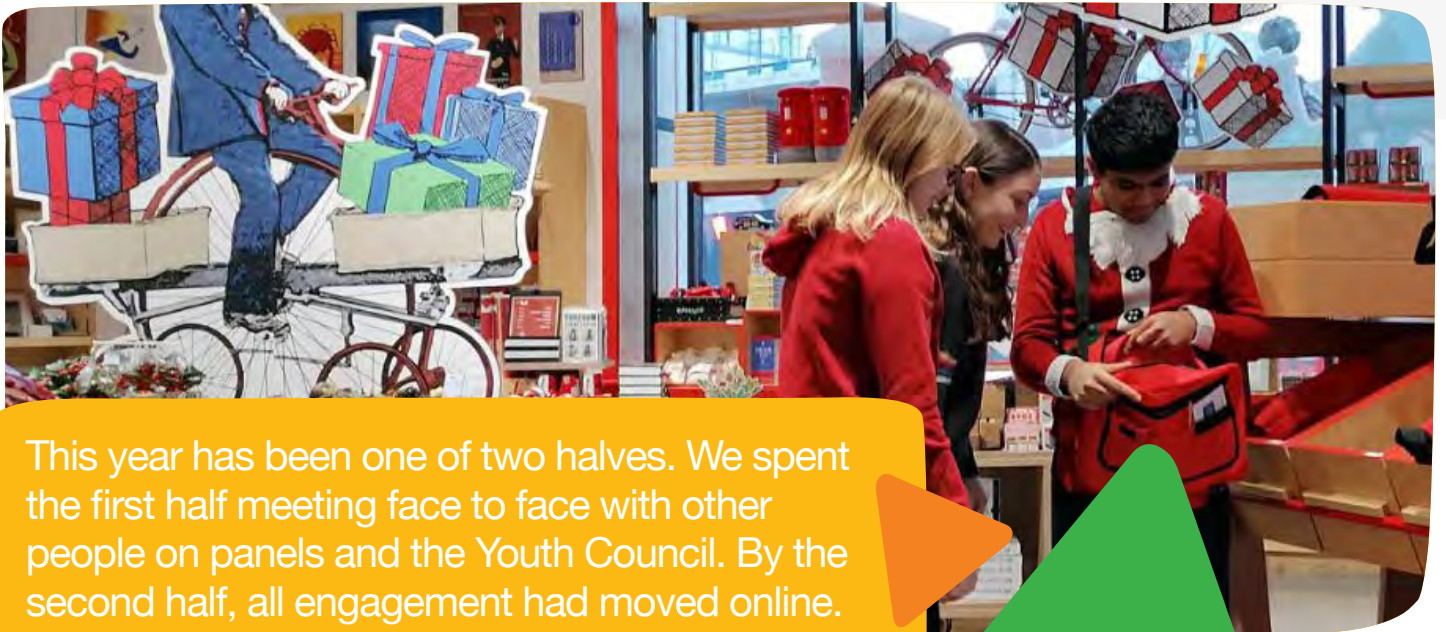
**Neil Goulden**  
Chair of Trustees



**Jolanta Lasota**  
Chief Executive



# An update from our Youth Council



This year has been one of two halves. We spent the first half meeting face to face with other people on panels and the Youth Council. By the second half, all engagement had moved online. Nevertheless, the principles and importance of co-production still remain at the heart of Ambitious about Autism.

What's most important when representing, advocating and supporting any group is that the real opinions and views of that group are heard and understood. And the best way to do this is to involve them directly. The participation programme enables us, the experts by experience, to share our opinions on what affects us and the changes that need to be made.

Without our involvement as young autistic people, charities would lack the intimate understanding of our needs. Being involved also allows us to use our skills, gaining experience in different projects, whilst benefiting others in our community.

No one is better positioned to voice the needs, worries, hopes and opinions of people with autism than autistic children and young people themselves. The participation programme has continued to listen to us throughout this year. It has given us the space and opportunity to have our voices heard and acted upon.

The pandemic was, and is, a completely unexpected disruption filled with change, fear, confusion and isolation. These have been incredibly difficult for anyone to deal with, but are even more challenging for people with autism.

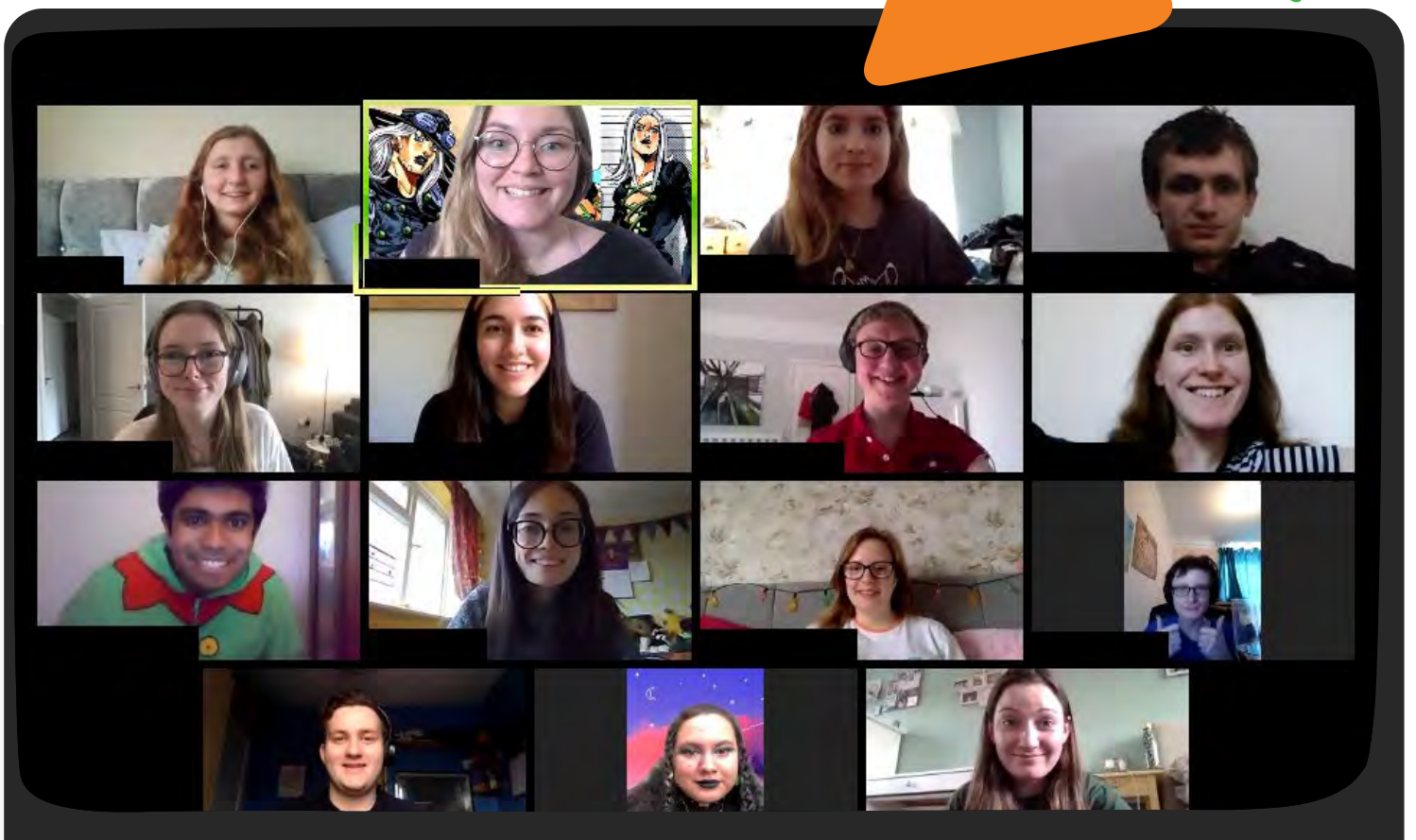
Autistic people can be considered a vulnerable demographic, whether or not there is a pandemic. However, our specific, wide-ranging, and often individualised needs have been forgotten in conversations surrounding the pandemic and its consequences.

Ambitious about Autism’s work during the pandemic speaks for itself – it has stepped up to this challenge by providing support for as many young people as possible and allowed people to thrive in these very uncertain times. It has emphasised the urgency of meeting the needs of young

autistic people and has shed light on those pandemic-related modifications to our lifestyles that could help autistic people in the long run.

Amid all the chaos, Ambitious about Autism has been a source of information, advocacy, friendship, advice and understanding, at a time when all of these were more important than ever.

**Emily, Josefina and Saffron**  
Youth Council members 2019–2020





# Why we're needed

## Meeting the challenge, making a difference

We're proud of our many successes, but the sad reality is that autistic children and young people face enormous challenges due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

On average, families are waiting



**18 months** for an autism diagnosis.

**56%**



of children with autism have been sent home from school illegally or denied a full education.

More than

**130,000**



schoolchildren in England are autistic, and this number is growing.

Fewer than

**one in four**

young people with autism access education beyond school.



Autistic graduates are least likely to be in full-time employment, with

**13.5%**

identifying as unemployed.

This figure is higher than for graduates with other disabilities and **three and a half times greater** than for non-disabled graduates (3.8%).

Just

**21.7%**


of autistic people are in full or part-time employment.



**£32bn** 

a year is the cost to society of the lack of support for autistic people and their families. This is more than the combined cost of strokes, cancer and heart disease.

**79%** of autistic people and **70%** of their families said they were socially isolated due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

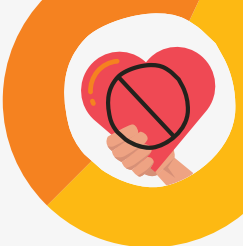
**42%** of autistic adults said they needed employment support, but **only 12%** said they received it. 

## Coronavirus and lockdown

The impact on autistic children and young people




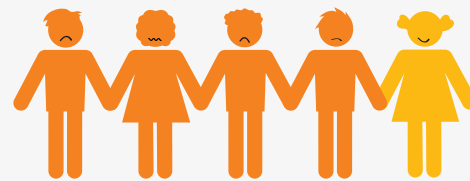
Autistic children and young people were accessing some support before the pandemic, **with more than half (58%)** receiving specialist support in education and one-fifth receiving mental health support.

Almost **80%** reported that this support had reduced or stopped following the outbreak of the pandemic. 




**Two-thirds** of people did not receive any support during the lockdown.

**65%** of autistic young people and those who support them believed it would be harder for them to find a job following the coronavirus pandemic. 



Before the pandemic, **four in five** autistic young people were experiencing mental health issues.

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, **63%** of autistic young people said their mental health was worse. 

# Our mission, vision and values

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

**Our vision** is of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of 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 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 open: to new ideas, in how we work and how we make decisions.



**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.

# Strategic report

## Review of the year ended 31 August 2020

This year was the third and final year of our Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy. Over the last three years, we've focused our efforts on six strategic priorities. Together, these have taken us closer to achieving our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.



### Ready for school:

research, design and delivery of early years resources for parents of autistic children.



### Achieving at school:

extending our role in providing services to school-age autistic children and influencing schools more widely.



### Preparing for adulthood:

developing our post-16 work for young people with autism.



### Building the evidence:

of the quality of our work and its outcomes.



### Building a community of support:

developing our information, participation, training, support and policy work, doing more to make sure that those with autism are heard loud and clear.



### Developing our organisational capacity:

developing and aligning our people, culture, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the delivery of our strategic aims.

This report outlines our progress in achieving these strategic objectives and outcomes in 2019–20 across the three main areas of our work: education, employability and engagement activities.

# Our Ambitious moments

As an organisation, we're proud of our ambition in both name and practice. Thanks to the hard work of autistic children and young people, their parents and carers, staff, partners, supporters and volunteers, we have so much to celebrate from the last year.

With thanks to our editorial board of youth patrons, parents and staff, these are just a few of our highlights for 2019–20.



## Ready for school

Our **Right from the Start** toolkit was downloaded 5,844 times from its launch in January 2020.<sup>1</sup> The online toolkit – a guide to autism in the early years – contains information to help families with young children to navigate the autism diagnosis process.

## Achieving at school



The **Rise School Sixth Form** opened in September 2019 in partnership and co-located with West Thames College. We welcomed 12 pupils in our successful first year with all pupils achieving their academic and personal ambitions.

The Saplings project at **TreeHouse School** won the BIG Biodiversity Challenge's Community Engagement Award in September 2019. The outdoor space gives children and young people with autism an opportunity to learn more about the natural world and develop new skills.

The **Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST)** was chosen to open a new special free school in Kingston, London. The school will support up to 90 pupils with autism aged 4–19.



<sup>1</sup> For the period January 2020 until 31 August 2020.



### Preparing for adulthood

The first **Ambitious College supported internships programme** began, offered in partnership with Whittington Health Trust. Interns participating in the programme combined their education with work across different parts of the hospital.

In July 2020, **Ambitious College won Natspec's Wellbeing and Mental Health Award**, in recognition of our work to support learners' self-regulation and sensory needs.

Our **Autism Exchange** programme continued to offer autistic young people paid experiences of work, despite the pandemic. Working in partnership with employers, we were able to adapt our offer to accommodate remote working placements, work environment assessments and careers support to 96 young people with autism.

**Employ Autism** was formally launched in November 2019 at our Night of Ambition gala event. Building on the success of Autism Exchange, Employ Autism will offer support to autistic young people across the country through access to specialist careers advice and work experience. We were quick to secure the support of employer partners – including TalkTalk Group in Greater Manchester, Deutsche Bank in Birmingham and the Civil Service – which have played a leading role in attracting wider employer interest.

### Building a community of support



The **Ambitious Youth Network** ran peer support sessions four times a week from the beginning of the first lockdown at the end of March 2020. More than 80 young people had attended the sessions by the end of August. To complement the Zoom chats, we also produced information resources, authored by young people, based on topics that matter to them.

We expanded our **Learner and Family Support** service to offer direct support to families of autistic pupils and learners at our schools and college. The service provided a vital source of support during the coronavirus pandemic, ranging from delivery of food parcels to liaising with local authorities and facilitating access to urgent health care.

We published **coronavirus and autism resources** on our website. Using expert information and advice, these resources were developed specifically to help families and young people with autism during the pandemic, and were shared nationally and internationally. From the launch in April 2020 more than 18,000 website visitors had accessed them.<sup>2</sup>



### Developing our organisational capacity

We successfully launched our **Emergency Coronavirus Appeal**, which raised a generous £574k from donors, exceeding our £546k target.

Our Night of Ambition gala dinner gala dinner, hosted by TalkTalk in November 2019 raised £358k.

<sup>2</sup> For the period April 2020 to 31 August 2020.

# Ambitious Futures

## 2019–20 review

Autism is 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 and disabilities, which affect them so profoundly that they need support in many areas.

When we launched our Ambitious Futures strategy in 2017, we knew we had some way to go to achieve our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism. This report outlines how we focused our efforts on six key areas to take us one step closer to making this a reality.

## Ready for school

Lack of early support has a profound impact on children and young people with autism, their families and our communities. Our research shows that from their child first being referred for an autism assessment, nearly half of parents wait longer than 18 months for a formal diagnosis. In some cases, parents reported waiting over three years.<sup>3</sup>

### Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We wanted more families to be better informed; to have the confidence to support their child and be able to make and influence decisions affecting their lives. We committed to research and create an early years resource specifically for parents.



<sup>3</sup> 46% of parents. Data from an online survey conducted by Ambitious about Autism between September and November 2019. The survey was open to parents and carers of autistic children aged 0–25 and 3,842 people responded.

## Right from the Start

We embarked on a two-year project to examine the pathways and barriers to accessing pre and post-diagnostic support in the early years. Through this research, we developed a programme of support to help parents understand their options if they think their young child may have autism or following an autism diagnosis.

**“ I didn’t think I could go to the GP with concerns about my son’s development. I lived this life, day in, day out, worrying he might have something like brain cancer, or wondering if I was just a bad mum, and not knowing how to help him.**

**Having a resource that shows parents what to look out for and how they can raise their concerns is really important. It’s also important parents know where to look for support and what their rights are. ”**

Helen, a parent in Kent, who was involved in the development of the toolkit, and spent two years waiting for a diagnosis for her son, Evan

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 part of our commitment to co-production, we collaborated with parents and young people in the development of the toolkit. We aimed to research what families need, develop solutions and provide trusted information.

The Right from the Start online toolkit – a guide to autism in the early years – was launched in January 2020. It contains a wealth of information and support to help families with young children navigate the autism diagnosis process. We want parents to feel fully informed and better able to provide and secure the support their child needs, as early as possible.

We officially launched the toolkit at our Right from the Start conference in central London, attended by 150 eminent researchers, academics and education, health and social care professionals, and parents and carers.

Before the conference, we received significant coverage in the national, local and trade press, and on TV and radio broadcast media, highlighting our new research on autism diagnosis waiting times. This enabled us to raise awareness of the plight faced by thousands of parents waiting for diagnosis and effective support.

The toolkit has been extremely successful, with 5,844 downloads from its launch to the end of August 2020.





# Achieving at school



More than 130,000 schoolchildren in England are autistic, and this number is growing. Yet autistic pupils are still missing out on education because of a lack of provision and support.

Fixed-term and permanent exclusions of autistic pupils have risen by over 90% since 2011. One-fifth of parents of children with autism have had to give up their job due to school exclusions; they regularly have to miss days from work too and reduce their working hours. Meanwhile, 80% of parents said the stress of getting their child the right support at school caused them to lose sleep.<sup>4</sup>

## Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

As part of our strategy, we wanted to extend our role in providing services to school-age children with autism and influence schools more widely. This included embedding our Ambitious Approach to education, further developing TreeHouse School, developing The Rise School and exploring opportunities to open further schools through our Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

## Our schools

Since TreeHouse School was formed in 1997, we've established our reputation for expertise and innovation in providing education services for autistic children and young people. By 2019–20, TreeHouse School and The Rise School were well established and The Rise School Sixth Form opened in September 2019. Last year we educated 200 pupils across both schools.

Our Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice that's offered across our schools and college. When pupils and learners leave our settings, we want them to find employment, go on to further education or training, and live fully as part of the communities of their choice (see p20).

<sup>4</sup> Ambitious about Autism We Need an Education survey conducted between September and November 2019



## Resilience during the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has created upheaval in everybody's lives but children and young people with autism and their families have been acutely affected by disruption to education, change to routine and the withdrawal of support services. During the pandemic and the lockdown, we provided high-quality education and support to pupils and learners, through our settings and home learning.

## TreeHouse School

TreeHouse School is dedicated to educating and supporting pupils with autism and learning difficulties aged 4–19 from across London and the home counties. We're proud to have maintained our Outstanding Ofsted rating since 2011.

Pupils at TreeHouse School receive individual and personalised learning and support suited to their needs, talents and interests. Our curriculum is creative and flexible, using our natural environment to extend pupils' learning. You are as likely to see maths being practised in the shop, the community or the garden, as you are in the classroom.



## What parents of TreeHouse School pupils have told us

“Excellent provision focused on my child's abilities rather than disabilities. The school promotes hope [and] skilled education, which embraces my child's needs, including emotional, psychological, pedagogical, social, sensory [and] independence skills.”

“100%. TreeHouse School is an example of how a specialist school should cater for children with autism and their families. Very compassionate, high[ly] skilled, determined, friendly ... a superb school.”

“Perfect. Even through the pandemic, the school has been supportive and progressive.”

“My child has improved a lot. His behaviour is better, as a result; his communication skills [have been] enhanced. He is happier because we can do a lot more as a family.”



## The Rise School

The Rise School, established in 2014, is dedicated to educating pupils with autism aged 4–19. We were proud to open The Rise School Sixth Form in 2019 in partnership with and co-located at West Thames College. Pupils at The Rise School access the national curriculum at approximately the same level as their neurotypical peers.

All pupils are given the support and challenge they need to learn and succeed in the world beyond school – their quality of life is key. Our aim for all our pupils is that they lead their lives as independently as possible, and are prepared for a promising future in the community of their choice.



### Achieving strong results at The Rise School

At The Rise School, we pursue quality of life through excellence in academic and social progress. Highlights in 2019–20 include:

- Exceptional Key Stage 4 outcomes for the third cohort of Year 11 pupils, with all choosing to continue in The Rise School Sixth Form.
- The opening of The Rise School Sixth Form, co-located at West Thames College. In our first year all pupils achieved the necessary passes on their Level 2 and Level 3 BTEC courses.

### Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) is our multi-academy trust, which aims to develop more schools to reach the children and young people with autism who need our specialist support. In January 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) approved the Trust to become an academy sponsor. This status will allow us to support underperforming academies so that more children and young people can receive the high-quality education they deserve.

In July 2020, the DfE announced that it had chosen AaAST to run a new special free school in Kingston, London. The school will support up to 90 pupils with autism aged 4–19.

An expert project group is leading on the planning for the school opening. Work has already begun on the initial design of the new school building.

Engagement with partners and the local community is vital to the development and success of our new school. We continue to work closely with the DfE, Kingston Council, local schools and Express CiC – a local parent and family support group for those with autistic children – to develop a school that is user-led and meaningful to the community.

# The pursuit of quality of life: innovative teaching and learning during the lockdown

## The Rise School

Gemma is a speech and language therapist. She works with pupils across the school providing a range of support to help them with English, communication skills, comprehension and vocabulary. Oh, and she knows everything there is to know about Disney characters.

Our schools remained open during the lockdown in early 2020. While some pupils continued to come to school, others pursued their education online. Gemma held weekly sessions over Skype with pupils who needed support. Working closely with teachers to ensure that lessons could still be engaging online, she tuned in to the pupils' interests to support their learning.

One pupil is a huge fan of Disney and Super Mario, so Gemma harnessed these interests to engage him with his lessons. In one example, she used a Disney version of "A Midsummers Night's Dream" to help the pupil's comprehension of Shakespeare's well-known play. He clearly understood the story and quickly knew all the characters and how they interacted. (For the record, Goofy plays Puck.)

## TreeHouse School



Percy has attended TreeHouse School from the age of five. He has complex autism and learning disabilities. His communication is severely limited and he has many behaviours that challenge. However, from his very earliest years, Percy has always loved music, going to concerts and festivals with us, and this passion has been actively developed by TreeHouse School, where he's flourished.

Other parents within the school community have shared similar experiences. Stories of shared music-making and children taking their first steps towards vocalising and communicating; the live concerts that have helped with pupils' anxiety levels and behaviours that challenge.

During the lockdown, many TreeHouse School pupils would wake up in the morning and go straight to the computer because they knew it was Tuesday, and Tuesday was the day for a remote-learning music lesson. One week, Percy got his music teacher, Patxi, to try and play one of his favourite songs. Not only had Patxi learned it by the following week but had also turned it into part of the lesson plan. Such talent! ”

Martyn, Percy's father



## Our Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which focuses on improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring that this quality of life continues into adulthood. We have a clear vision of what we want our education settings to achieve. We want to prepare children and young people for a happy and fulfilling life and, while doing so, afford them dignity, respect and compassion.

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.

In this first year, the foundation's grant has enabled us to develop and test this model in our own schools and college, and to develop a robust guidance and competency framework.



Other highlights include:

- In consultation with the PBS Alliance steering group and National Association of Independent Schools & Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS) member schools, we developed a self-review tool. This tool enables education settings to conduct an audit of their practice and identify areas for development. Feedback has been very positive, with settings stating that using the tool as a starting point makes the model framework more accessible and has helped them identify short and long-term goals.
- We started using an action research structure to support the development and implementation of change management projects. This should help improve accountability and measuring the impact of the initiatives implemented.
- Expansion of our Integrated Services Team comprising transdisciplinary professionals to help us develop and implement the Ambitious Approach.
- We adapted our Ambitious Approach model to create the Ambitious Framework, which will enable other education settings to use a similar approach, with support from Ambitious about Autism.
- Successfully identifying three suitable education settings that will partner with us to develop the Ambitious Framework in the 2020–21 academic year.

**Our key performance indicator is pupil and learner numbers. We ended the year with 95 pupils (2019: 88) at TreeHouse School, 73.8 full-time equivalent learners (2019: 77.4) at Ambitious College and 105 pupils (2019: 94) at The Rise School.**

**We've made a good start to the 2020–21 academic year, as we've met or exceeded our term one target numbers of pupils and learners for all three education settings. This includes 114 pupils at The Rise School, 93 pupils at TreeHouse School and 70 learners at Ambitious College.**

# Preparing for adulthood



Evidence shows that the challenges preventing young people with autism from making the successful move from education to employment are immense.

All young people deserve the support to progress to further education, training or employment when they leave school and to live as part of their community. Just 21.7% of autistic people are in full or part-time employment. Crucially, there's a lack of specialist careers advice and work experience tailored to their needs.

We want more children and young people with autism to be empowered to influence decisions about their lives.

## Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

Our strategy set out how we would develop our post-16 support for young people with autism. This included the development of Ambitious College and our first supported internship programme.

We also wanted to develop our employment programme, Employ Autism, to support more young people to make the successful transition from education to employment.



Just **21.7%** of autistic people are in full or part-time employment.

## Ambitious College

Ambitious College was set up as London’s first independent specialist day college dedicated to providing specialist and integrated further education support for people with autism. We work with learners aged 16–25, through our Ambitious Approach to education.

Our highly personalised curriculum is designed to support our learners positively 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.



## What learners and their parents have told us about their experience of Ambitious College

**90%** of learners like college.

**90%** of learners feel safe in college.

**Community access** is the most popular activity amongst learners.

**95%** of learners agreed with the statement, “when I ask for things at college they happen”.

**78%** of learners like work experience.

**70%** of learners who learned from home during the first lockdown in 2020, said they enjoyed it.

Results from the Ambitious College learner survey, 2019-20.



They have provided invaluable advice, telephone support and additional resources such as computers and learning materials to access learning. For our daughter, it was having access to classes online, which she thoroughly enjoyed. She was able to access her speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. ”



We believe Ambitious College staff and the leadership and management team have been exceptional! ”

Responses to the Ambitious College parent and carer survey, 2019–20.

## Supported internships

The first Ambitious College supported internships programme started in 2019–20, in partnership with Whittington Health NHS Trust.

A typical day for our supported interns includes:

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

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

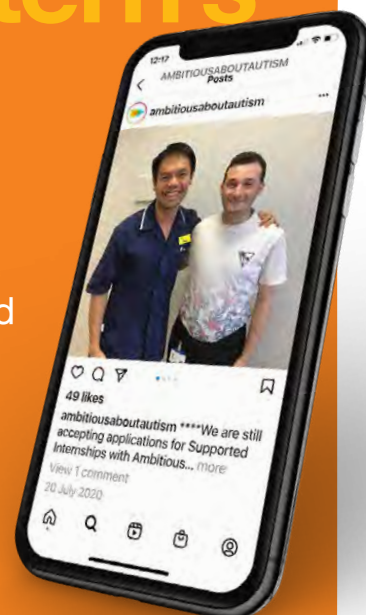
All supported interns in our 2019–20 cohort undertook and passed the OCN Level 1 Certificate in Employability, achieving a 100% pass rate in our first year of the programme.

## Natspec award winner: Ambitious College

In July 2020, we were the proud winners of the Natspec Award for Wellbeing and Mental Health. There were more than 50 entries in the category. Nonetheless, we won based on the innovative work of our occupational therapist (OT) team, and their creation of “OT TV” to support regulation and wellbeing. The judging panel said they especially liked how the approach was embedded across the whole curriculum and were impressed by the evidence of the impact that it has had across the college.

## One intern's story: Mikey

This is Mikey (pictured right), our Ambitious intern who took part in our supported internship at Whittington Hospital in 2019–20.



During his placement, Mikey worked as a ward assistant, where he developed his communication, teamwork and admin skills by organising patient files and working on reception on one of the wards. Mikey also helped manager Rae review menu options for patients on the wards and learned about money management and budgeting.





# Building confidence and independence through creativity

Zubair continued to learn on site at Ambitious College during the lockdown in the summer term of 2019–20, while others learned from home.

In the previous two terms, he had started engaging in several vocational activities alongside our employment specialist, to explore work options for the future.

Zubair's goal was to improve his decision-making and independence, to support his quality of life.

As he completed different activities, his confidence started to improve. He was working quickly, without mistakes, and making decisions independently. At this point, he was introduced to photography.

Zubair walked around the college taking photos, initially only when prompted. He soon became more confident and began to point out what he would like to photograph. To build on this, he was given

photos of various things around the college and asked to explore the college to find them. This task encouraged him to work on his analytical skills and decision-making. When he found one of the images on his sheet, he would photograph it.

During the first session, Zubair completed the task in half the allotted time, almost entirely independently. Over the next few weeks, he was given objects that were increasingly difficult to find around the college and continued to complete the sessions quickly and independently.

Having found an object, he would point at it and photograph it, without seeking affirmation. This clearly showed his improved decision-making skills.

With increased confidence, Zubair was also able to say he did not like something for the first time. He continues to work more independently in class, with less need for support.



“Up close and beautiful”, photo by Zubair

## Employ Autism

Autistic people bring unique qualities and diverse perspectives to the workplace and we are working across the UK to ensure that they get employment experience.

Through Employ Autism, we want to improve outcomes for autistic young people and help them bridge the gap to employment. We are achieving this by working in partnership with young people, their families, educators, careers advisers and employers.

The Employ Autism network is creating a sustainable model to give young people careers advice and work experience, and provide training for employers, educators, charities and public sector organisations.

In February 2020, we launched the first phase of the Employ Autism network – in the north-west of England – at an event hosted by TalkTalk in Manchester. Representatives from local government, business and autism charities were invited to hear more about the programme and how they could be involved in their region. Theo, an Autism Exchange intern, spoke at the event, alongside Tristia Harrison, CEO of TalkTalk, and the Mayor of Salford.



**Employment is often out of reach for autistic young people, which is a huge waste of potential. Employ Autism seeks to change this, and I am proud to play a part in this vital programme.**

Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, Ambitious about Autism President and Chair of the Employ Autism Development Board

## Autism Exchange

We have a successful record in supporting autistic young people to access paid work experience through our award-winning Autism Exchange programme in London.

Over the last five years, we've developed extensive experience in providing careers advice and work experience to young people, as well as training for employers.

During 2019–20, we continued to work with partners to provide work experience opportunities for autistic young people with organisations including the Civil Service, SAP, Nest, BP and Essex County Council, despite the impact of the pandemic.

As workplace restrictions were introduced due to the pandemic, some employers needed staff to work from home. Others, however, were able to continue to support staff within the workplace.

Changes such as these can have a big impact on autistic employees, especially young people still adjusting to the world of work. We worked closely with our employer partners to support autistic young people to adjust to working from home as well as returning to physical workspaces.

# Creating a more neurodiverse workplace

“As a 23-year-old recent graduate with a degree in English and creative writing, I was feeling pretty unhirable. Add a global pandemic and things get even tougher. Now imagine being autistic on top of all of that. Would you hire me? I was feeling pretty confident that nobody ever would before I took part in my internship with the Civil Service.

“In 2020, for the first time since it began in 2015, the Civil Service Autism Exchange ran entirely virtually (for obvious reasons). Not an ideal situation, certainly, but one that came with unique benefits: the normalisation of remote working will undoubtedly be a benefit to autistic jobseekers, many of whom will be able to work much more comfortably and efficiently from home.

And despite never having met face to face, I felt a real sense of connection with my team. In fact, the members of my team – and indeed every single civil servant who was kind enough to lend me their time – acknowledged me as an autistic woman, offered me support, but never once treated me in the condescending manner that people often do when they learn I am disabled. The culture of the Civil Service is, to echo the sentiments of fellow intern Rashida Denbow, “a workforce that celebrates difference”.

“On a practical level, I have gained a whole host of experiences – training in project management, insight into business operations, networking, recruiting skills and one-to-one career coaching, to name a few. It’s an excellent CV booster and a few interns even go on to forge careers within the Civil Service. In a world where many autistic individuals find mainstream work difficult, but where access to disability benefits is becoming more and more scarce for those with learning difficulties, and the Guaranteed Interview scheme is often ignored by employers, the government has a duty to its autistic citizens to create suitable career opportunities.

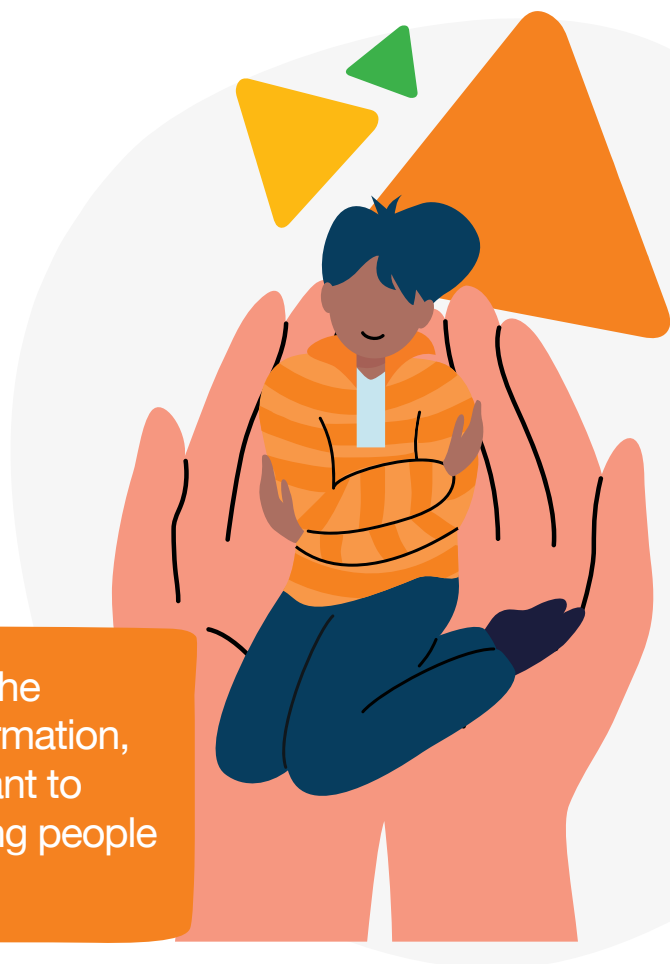
“I am immensely grateful for the experience provided to me by my department, the GCF Capability Team, and I want more of my fellow autistic adults to have access to such a valuable opportunity.”

This is an excerpt from a blog by Rachel [published on the Ambitious about Autism website](#).



# Building a community of support

Children and young people with autism are at the heart of what we do. Through our national information, participation, training and support work, we want to create a world where autistic children and young people are heard, included and supported.



Following the coronavirus outbreak, this was more important than ever. Our focus turned to amplifying the voices of autistic children and young people, and their parents and carers, as they faced the urgent need for support.

## **Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan**

While our strategic plan was implemented before the coronavirus pandemic, it did enable us to establish important community and support networks, which proved vital during the lockdown.

## **Ambitious Youth Network and Youth Council**

Over the past three years, youth participation at Ambitious about Autism has developed from the core Youth Council into a programme that covers a range of projects in education, health, research, and arts and heritage.

Our Know Your Normal and Include Autism campaigns have had worldwide reach and influence and have been recognised with awards.

## **Working with autistic young people to face the challenges of the pandemic**

The pandemic posed challenges and changed the way in which we collaborate with autistic young people. The development of the online Ambitious Youth Network during 2020 enabled us to reach more young people and professionals than ever before.

Since March 2020, the participation team has adapted its programme to engage online with autistic young people.

The participation team and training team have also offered online webinars to professionals who work with autistic young

people on ‘Understanding autism and mental health’. These webinars, funded by Mind (the mental health charity) and the Department of Health and Social Care, were co-produced and co-delivered with young people from our Ambitious Youth Network.

## A positive future

Despite the challenges of 2020, we have so much we still want to achieve in collaboration with our Youth Council and Ambitious Youth Network, including:

- developing a post-diagnostic support programme for autistic young people

- continuing the expansion of our Ambitious Youth Network to reach more young people across the country
- the ability to offer more online peer support sessions to reduce loneliness and encourage more young people to connect with one other.

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



# Peer support for autistic young people during lockdown

The pandemic was a source of anxiety and increased isolation for many autistic young people. So, when our Youth Network suggested that we offer support to them and other autistic young people during the lockdown, we started weekly Zoom chats.

Our participation team ran four 90-minute sessions a week, with 10 young people in each session. From the beginning of the lockdown in March until 31 August 2020, more than 80 young people attended the sessions. To complement the Zoom chats, we also produced content, authored by young people, based on topics that matter to them.



The peer support sessions have given me a feeling of friendship when my difficulties with my autism and mental health have left me feeling alone [for a long time]. [When] lockdown began, life became even more scary and hard to manage. Rules and restrictions kept changing and, as someone who clings to order, numbers and routine, this was extremely stressful. It still is stressful, but having people to check in with has been invaluable. Even more so when the people I have met are some of the most interesting people I have ever met. Each meeting, I learn so many new things and seem to have a new perspective on something! ”

Saffron, member of Youth Council



I joined the sessions in late March and immediately felt welcomed. No matter what mood I was in, or what external situations I was facing, chatting to other young people and doing fun activities made me completely forget about the rest of the world. ”

Vera, peer support session participant



After finding out about the online chats and being able to speak to other young autistic people who know how I'm feeling, I don't feel alone in all this any more. We can share our feelings and advice in a safe space full of honesty, kindness and support. Thanks to the participation team, I'm making it through this when I didn't think I could. ”

Young autistic participant, peer support sessions



## Learner and Family Support service

Before the pandemic, we offered family support to the parents and carers of autistic pupils and learners attending our schools and college. The team initially comprised a learner and family support manager and two transitions officers. They offered advice, support and guidance to ensure that autistic pupils and learners had a secure pathway of progress once they left school or college.

The pandemic suddenly presented the team with a new and pressing challenge. Calls for support increased dramatically as essential local services and support disappeared overnight. Anxious parents needed support to help with their autistic child being at home, and to cope with the changes to routine and ever-changing rules. There was a clear need to expand the team and provide welfare support to parents and carers, in addition to the usual guidance.

We quickly expanded the team, adding two new welfare support officers. The support the team provided ranged from delivering food parcels to liaising with local authorities and facilitating access to urgent health care.

We also produced information and resources for families coping with the lockdown, in our schools and college communities, and nationwide.

# A life-saving service during lockdown



The new Ambitious Learner and Family Support service has been a lifesaver. With local authorities under even more financial pressure during the pandemic, battling for and sustaining the right level of support for our young people has become even harder; this applies to both education and social care.

The Learner and Family Support team stepped in to assist with my son's case and I can't tell you the relief I felt. As parents or carers, we often feel isolated in our battles and don't know where to turn to get the 'instant' help we need. I have only the highest praise for the family support team who have guided me through the necessary processes to achieve the best outcomes for my son. I honestly don't know what I would have done without them.

Not only has the team helped with our case, they have also furnished me, as a parent, with a wealth of knowledge to take forward.

Thank you so much for your expertise and efficiency and keep up the amazing work to 'make the ordinary possible' for all our sons and daughters. ”

Caroline, parent of Ambitious College learner

## Online information and support

In April 2020, we completed our website refresh project. The new [ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](https://ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk) features improved navigation and new information to address the needs of parents, carers and families of children with autism, as well as autistic young people themselves.

From the website refresh until August 2020, we had more than 1m page views on our website. Engagement with our online resources has increased significantly as users find information more efficiently and spend more time on the site.

Our online coronavirus and autism resources brought together expert information and advice to support people during the pandemic. These proved to be an important resource for parents and carers, as well as autistic young people in their time of need – as evidenced through engagement levels and feedback. From April to August 2020, the resources had almost 18,500 unique visitors, with 11,179 engaging with our illustrated story, *The World Has Turned Upside Down*, which aimed to explain the lockdown to autistic young people.

We launched the first in our series of autism and inclusion information in July 2020, focusing on race and racism. The purpose of these resources is to support autistic young people to explore different identities to foster greater understanding and acceptance. We will work with autistic young people, parents and carers, and teachers to co-produce new autism-specific resources on topics, including mental health, friendships and LGBTQ+ issues.

We developed our Talk about Autism online community, which provides peer support for parents and carers of children with autism.

## Training

Ambitious about Autism provides training and consultancy to local authorities, healthcare providers, schools, colleges, employers and community groups.

During 2019-20 we trained more than 1,500 professionals (1,996 in 2018-19) across a range of sectors to become more autism confident. Figures for this year were reduced due to the postponement of training in the early stages of the pandemic. Of those





completing the training in 2019-20, 91% said they felt they had improved their knowledge and confidence.

## **Our partnership with the Autism Education Trust**

We are proud to be a founding partner of the Autism Education Trust (AET), supported by the Department for Education. Together, we strive to ensure that all autistic children and young people receive the education they deserve.

The partnership gives us the opportunity to provide training to schools and post-16 settings, as well as strategic support and quality assurance to other training organisations.

During the early part of 2019-20 we trained almost 200 education practitioners face to face using AET materials and resources. The global pandemic caused a sharp, and persistent downturn in demand as education settings attempted to follow guidance on whether to close entirely and, rightly,

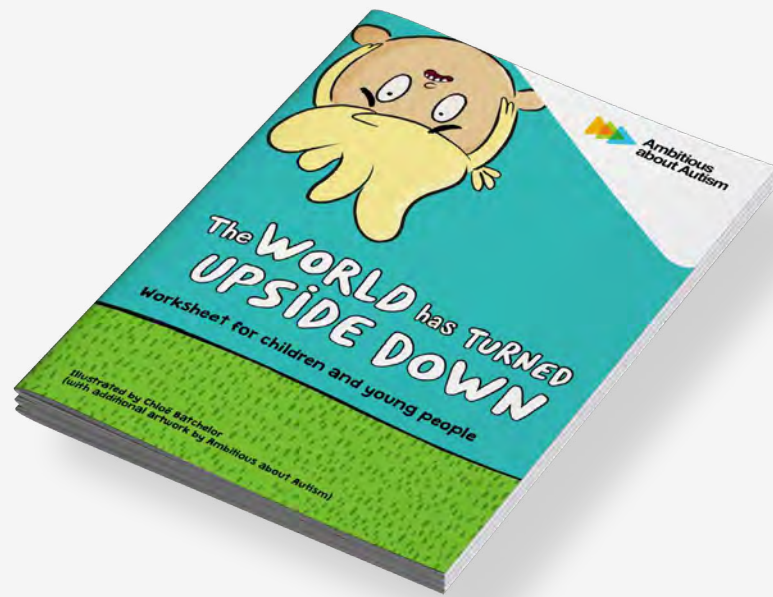
focused on their learners. Despite this, we worked with AET to move to online training, facilitating access to some resources for free for professionals, rather than printed versions, which have an associated cost.

We completed a comprehensive, two-year, multi-region project with the AET at the end of March 2020, to increase uptake by post-16 professionals in our training.

Since then, we've been fortunate to secure additional funding to develop a free toolkit for professionals, autistic young people and employers. The toolkit will be aligned with Employ Autism, to support more autistic young people on their journey to employment. We are on track to launch the toolkit in 2021.



# The World Has Turned Upside Down



Following the UK-wide lockdown in March 2020, Red Brick Road, a creative agency, approached us about collaborating on a project to support children and young people with autism. This project would also help to raise much-needed funds as part of our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal.

We enlisted bestselling children's author Kes Gray ("Oi Dog") and illustrator Chloe Batchelor to help us create an illustrated story to explain the lockdown to children with autism. Crucially, it was a story that all children could enjoy. The story was available to download from a web page that included an invitation to make a voluntary donation to the charity's coronavirus appeal.

Jon Snow, broadcaster and Ambassador of Ambitious about Autism, recorded a reading of the story, which we shared on YouTube. The story was also available on our website and shared through email, social media and outdoor display advertising in cities such as Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford and Southampton.

More than 20,000 visitors accessed the story through the website, YouTube, social media and the Issuu publishing platform. It was read by people in the UK, as well as the US, Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada and Germany.

Following the launch of the story, we worked with special education teachers to produce worksheets for children and young people, to help them work through their perceptions of the lockdown.

Red Brick Road and Ambitious about Autism won Bronze in the Best Thoughtful Marketing Campaign category of the Data and Marketing Association (DMA) Awards in October 2020.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of Kes Gray and Chloe Batchelor. We're also very grateful to Red Brick Road, m/SIX, The&Partnership, Clear Channel UK and Tony Gray from Words by Design for contributing their valuable expertise and time to support the publication of this story.

**“ We just had to let you know what a fabulous social story this was, and we are now sharing with our families. ”**

Parents of Ealing Self Help Training Scheme (PESTS)

**“ What a lovely book. This will be very useful for some of our KS2 and KS3 students. Thank you for sharing. ”**

School Head Teacher



# Developing our organisational capacity

In March 2020, we were halfway through what was turning out to be another successful year for Ambitious about Autism.

We had successfully launched the Right from the Start toolkit for parents, as well as our Employ Autism programme. We had opened our new sixth form at The Rise School, and were embedding our Ambitious Approach across our schools and college. In February, we were able to enjoy the rare privilege of bringing all our staff together for our staff conference and awards. Our new strategy was also on track to be launched in September 2020.

## **Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan**

Our strategic objective was to develop and align our people, culture, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the delivery of our strategic aims.

## **Our response to the coronavirus pandemic**

The coronavirus outbreak meant that we had to review our priorities. Across the entire organisation, our number one focus was to support children and young people with autism and their families to cope with the impact of the pandemic.



Everyone in our organisation pulled together to support autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and our own staff during this challenging time. Our resilience was often tested, yet from staff in our schools and college to facilities and IT to HR, fundraising, finance and youth participation, we were united in our aim to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism, even in extraordinary circumstances.

## **Ambitious about Autism Strategy 2020–21**

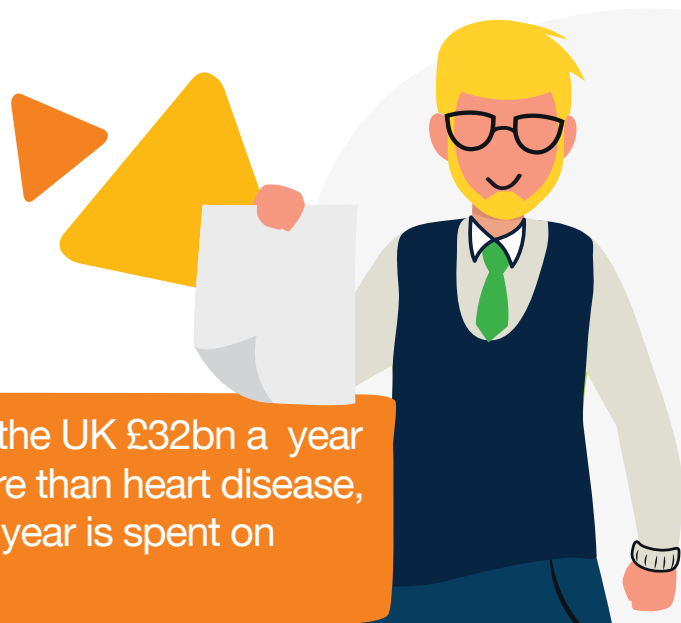
In 2019, we started developing our new five-year strategy for 2020–25. We engaged with young autistic people, parents and carers, partners, staff and trustees to help shape our plans.

Thanks to their input, we were well on our way to developing a new strategy to achieve our vision of world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Given the emergency, we decided to produce a one-year strategy to focus our efforts on meeting the extraordinary and urgent needs of our community. Our new strategy is based on the principles we'd planned for the next five years, the key one being that autistic children and young people are at the heart of all we do.

# Building the evidence

Although it is estimated that autism costs the UK £32bn a year in lost earnings and care and support (more than heart disease, stroke and cancer combined), only £4m a year is spent on autism research.



Our aim as a charity is to gather more evidence of the best educational approaches for children and young people with autism. This evidence-based approach underpins all of our work.

## Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We set out to build evidence of the quality of our work and its outcomes, including evaluation of our Ambitious Approach and the Employ Autism programme.

## Our research and evaluation programme

Our Research Governance Committee oversees our research and evaluation work to ensure alignment with our strategy and an ethical approach. We partnered with the University of Warwick and University College London on research evidence to

underpin our Right from the Start toolkit. We also worked with the Centre for Research in Autism Education (CRAE) to assess post-16 outcomes since the Children and Families Act 2014.

We have adapted our plans to evaluate the quality of work and outcomes of the Ambitious Approach. Despite the impact of the pandemic on our ability to research in a consistent environment, we were able to react to data collection in an agile way to undertake a formative rather than a summative assessment.

We established a partnership with Discover Autism Research and Employment (DARE), CRAE and Autistica to evaluate our Employ Autism programme. We are looking forward to completing the first phase of our evaluation in the 2020–21.

# Our Ambitious partners and supporters



We are deeply grateful to our strategic partners and generous supporters, who have stood by us throughout this very challenging year. It's thanks to your ongoing support that we raised £2m this year, enabling us to continue to ensure better outcomes for children and young people with autism.

## Our Ambitious Futures 2020 plan

We committed to exploring new fundraising opportunities, expanding our reach and developing new sources of income, to support the achievement of our strategic aims. Here's a taste of just some of our highlights over the last three years.

- Right from the Start: The development and creation of this important toolkit for parents was made possible thanks to **Sarah Yamani's** generosity.
- Ambitious Approach: Thanks to the multi-year support from the **Joseph Levy Foundation**, we have started implementing the Ambitious Approach.
- Ambitious College: Our appeal successfully raised £4.5m to fund the vital work of our two college campuses. A particular thank you to our funding partner **MariaMarina Foundation** for its significant contribution, and to every supporter who donated since our appeal began.
- Supported internships: Thanks to the generous gift from **Graham and Susan Tobbell**, we were able to open our first supported internships programme.
- Employ Autism: **Pears Foundation** provided seed funding that made the launch of this vital programme possible.
- Understanding autism and mental health webinars: Thanks to funding from **Mind** and the **Department of Health and Social Care**, we worked with young people to co-produce and deliver webinars, designed for professionals, which started in August 2020.

# Our strategic partners

We are proud of the strong working relationships forged with our partners over many years. Our strategic partners share our ambition to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

## Pears Foundation

The launch of Employ Autism during 2019–20 was made possible thanks to the generosity of Pears Foundation, long-standing partners and friends of Ambitious about Autism. In March 2020, Sir Trevor Pears spoke of his motivations for supporting Employ Autism at our President’s Dinner at the House of Lords, inspiring employers and funders to get behind the programme.

We remain forever grateful to Pears Foundation for sharing our vision and striving to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.



## Rapha

Thanks to the support of its chief executive and founder, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.3m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014. In April 2020, 34 cyclists took part in the Rapha Hill Climb in support of the 2.6 Challenge. Collectively, they raised £21k. We’re also pleased to have Simon and Lucy Mottram’s support as two of our ambassadors.



## TalkTalk

Since 2006, TalkTalk has raised £5m for Ambitious about Autism. As well as sponsoring the annual Night of Ambition gala event, TalkTalk supports us with campaign development and broadband connectivity. In 2019, they became a leading partner of Employ Autism in rolling out the programme to the north-west of England and leading the call to encourage businesses to join the partnership.



## Joseph Levy Foundation

Our partnership with the Joseph Levy Foundation continued over the last year. We have been enormously grateful for the foundation’s ongoing support to enable us to develop our pioneering Ambitious Approach to education, and to navigate the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The Ambitious Approach has already had a tremendously positive impact on our services, which would not have been possible without the backing and friendship of the foundation.



## Santander

Santander has coordinated a £1m investment into our groundbreaking employability initiative, the Employ Autism Higher Education Network. This programme will unlock the potential of thousands of autistic students and boost neurodiversity within the UK workforce.

The strategic partnership between Ambitious about Autism and Santander has created a game-changing new autism employability programme spanning a network of universities across the UK. Hundreds of careers and employment professionals in this network will receive specialist training and support to work with autistic students, to help guide them into sustainable employment.



## MariaMarina Foundation

A committed funder of Ambitious College since 2016, MariaMarina Foundation has been instrumental in the expansion of the college and were lead funder in 2019–20. Their unwavering support and belief in the potential of our learners has transformed the lives of hundreds of autistic young people across London.



## The Clothworkers' Foundation

The Clothworkers' Foundation is a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, involved in developing many strategic projects with us since 2006. A lead funder in the construction of TreeHouse School and Ambitious College and, more recently, an early and committed supporter of our expanding Learner and Family Support service; their contribution over the last 15 years has underpinned our success.



## Graham and Susan Tobbell

Since their first introduction to us back in 2016, Graham and Susan Tobbell have provided essential seed funding to our Ambitious Futures appeal and to our supported internships programme. They embody the essence of working in partnership, regularly attending our events and always providing honest and valuable feedback on our plans and strategies. In 2019–20, as the pandemic struck, they were early and generous with significant unrestricted funding to help us weather the storm. We are fortunate and grateful to have Graham and Susan as our partners.

# Thank you

## Donors who support our mission

Our mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism. We can achieve this only through our outstanding education services and a range of exciting and innovative projects that support autistic children and young people. This work would not be possible without our organisational structures, which support the work that we do. From our participation team, through to marketing, fundraising, IT and HR these teams provide the foundations that enable us to deliver our services to support autistic children and young people.

Maintaining these services requires continual investment. And we can do this only by having voluntarily donated income that we are free to spend where we know that it's most needed. We are fortunate and very grateful to have received generous donations this year, from a whole host of funders.

This unrestricted income was so important in the first half of 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic presented us with the challenge of increased costs for providing emergency support. This was just as all our fundraising events – our largest source of unrestricted income – were cancelled or postponed.

We launched our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal to help manage this unprecedented double impact on our finances and are grateful for the overwhelmingly generous response.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated unrestricted funds to us this year, from our regular individual donors to our corporate partners and all of you who creatively and enthusiastically raised money for our Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. We are extremely fortunate to have the support of a committed group of donors, many of whom have funded our mission to help autistic children and young people over a long period. In a year in which our supporters received many other calls for assistance, we are honoured and grateful to have received unrestricted support to help fund our core work.

We have recognised these supporters in this report (see p42). We wish to pay special thanks to the following donors: Pears Foundation, Jefferies, Rapha, TalkTalk, and Graham and Susan Tobbell.

The unrestricted income helped pay for our emergency response to the pandemic and gave us much-needed financial stability in uncertain times. This commitment to our core mission supports the lifeblood of our organisation. It is the reason we can continue our work to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

**Thank you.**



# Emergency Coronavirus Appeal

The coronavirus pandemic presented an unimaginably difficult challenge for autistic children and young people and their families.

We had to think fast and work round the clock to create innovative solutions to the problems faced by those we serve. We acted quickly, setting an ambitious target of £546k to meet the unanticipated costs incurred directly as a result of the pandemic crisis. We are so grateful to our donors, who gave £574k.

“

You really have gone out of your way to support us and we are so very grateful to have had you ‘in our corner’. I don’t honestly know what we would’ve done without your support! ”

Parent of pupil

We would like to pay special thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, Jefferies, Rapha, TalkTalk, Pears Foundation, MariaMarina Foundation, Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson, Sir Harvey McGrath, the Masonic Charitable Foundation and Kusuma Trust for their generous contributions to our appeal.

This phenomenal show of support for autistic children and young people, and their families, has enabled us to give them specific, new support, including IT to enable remote learning, information and advice services, and support networks.

## The 2.6 Challenge

Many of our supporters participated in the 2.6 Challenge on Sunday, 26 April 2020 to raise funds for Ambitious about Autism, which would usually have been donated through the London Marathon.

Despite the pandemic and the lockdown, our supporters came up with some extraordinarily creative ways to raise funds: from selling made-to-order face masks to tap-dancing, hosting online quizzes, a DJ set and even 26 sun salutations. Combined with the efforts of those who cycled, climbed, walked and ran, a total of £76k was generously donated.

## TalkTalk employee fundraising

TalkTalk employees have also raised funds for Ambitious about Autism this year. Michael Clark a TalkTalk staff member, raised almost £2k in the 2.6 Challenge, running 26 hill repetitions. Ruth Kennedy and Bronagh McCloskey organised a virtual 10k run in which 72 people took part, running, walking and even paddle boarding.

Collectively, they raised £10k. It’s thanks to the efforts of inspirational individuals like Michael, Ruth, Bronagh and their colleagues that we can continue our vital work.

# Our Employ Autism supporters

## Night of Ambition

Our Night of Ambition gala dinner, hosted by TalkTalk, raised £358k. The event was compèred by comedian and performer Ruby Wax and featured a powerful video produced by our Youth Patrons, which highlighted the challenges that so many autistic young people face in accessing paid work.

## Employ Autism Business Ambassador Group

In 2020, we established our Business Ambassador Group of like-minded business leaders working collaboratively to develop our Employ Autism programme. We now have more than 30 ambassadors and, with a solid foundation and framework, are excited about the prospect of growing our contributions in 2021 and beyond.

## President's dinner

We held our annual president's dinner in March 2020 at the House of Lords. The event was hosted by our president, Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, and attended by Sir Trevor Pears of Pears Foundation, our long-standing partner. Through the event, we raised awareness of Employ Autism with employers and donors and increased support for the programme.

“

We are delighted to have established our Business Ambassador Group of business leaders who share a passion for bridging the gap between education and employment for young autistic people. With representation ranging from the telco, energy tech and financial services sectors, through to insurance, media and entertainment, professional services and healthcare, we are committed to supporting the fantastic Employ Autism programme. We achieve this through fundraising, leveraging our networks for introductions and promoting the significant business value that a neurodiverse workforce delivers. ”

Simon Clements, Chair, Business Ambassador Group

“

Encouraging colleagues to be themselves is one of TalkTalk's core values, so celebrating diversity and providing an inclusive working environment is really important to us. The Employ Autism programme is a truly transformative initiative that will enable thousands of autistic young people to fulfil their potential in the workplace and I would encourage other business leaders to get involved. ”

Tristia Harrison, TalkTalk Chief Executive

# Huge thanks to our proud partners and supporters



## Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation  
TalkTalk Group plc  
Joseph Levy Foundation  
Rapha Racing Ltd  
MariaMarina Foundation  
Santander  
The Clothworkers' Foundation  
Graham and Susan Tobbell

## Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management  
Ali MacCallum  
Alison Halsey  
Atos  
BBC Children in Need  
Beatrice Laing Trust  
Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation  
Carlyle Group  
Chapman Charitable Trust  
Charlotte Grobien OBE, Give It Away  
Charlotte Warner  
Chris Pond  
Collaboration Company  
Crédit Agricole CIB  
David Astor  
Department for Education  
Department of Health and Social Care  
Elizabeth Stanton  
Gavin Sumner  
Sir Harvey McGrath  
Heathrow Community Trust  
Hornsey Parochial Charities  
Jean Levenant  
Jefferies  
Joanna Healey  
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant  
Jonathan Andrews  
Ketchum  
Koral Anderson  
Kusuma Trust UK  
Laurie Edmans CBE  
Lesley Longstone

Lucy Nutt  
M/Six  
Magnus Schoeman  
Martyn Craddock  
Masonic Charitable Foundation  
Matt Davis and Eliza Mischon  
Matt Hutnell  
Michael Clark  
Mind  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Neil Goulden  
Nick Hornby  
Paul Disley-Tindell  
Peter Cruddas Foundation  
Philip Noblet  
Philippa Stobbs  
PIMCO Foundation  
Rather Be Cycling  
Red Brick Road  
Sarah Yamani and Prof Dr Malik R Dahlan  
Simon Clements  
Simon Hillson  
Simon and Lucy Mottram  
Smurfit Kappa Foundation  
Snowbility  
St James's Place Foundation  
Sue Adkins  
Tanith Dodge  
The Annette Duvollet Trust  
The Edward Gostling Foundation  
The Gerald and Gail Ronson Family Foundation  
The Harebell Centenary Fund  
The Health Foundation (PPP)  
The Lawson Trust  
The Rayne Foundation  
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust  
The&Partnership  
Tim Barber  
Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE  
Tokio Marine  
Tottenham Grammar School Foundation  
Tristia Harrison  
Variety, The Children's Charity  
Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

# Looking to the future

## Ambitious about Autism strategy 2020–21

Our strategic plan for 2020–21 describes what we plan to do as we focus on supporting autistic children and young people during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. Although the world is changing, our vision for a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism remains the same.

Children and young people will continue to be at the heart of all that we do. Our new strategic plan sets out five objectives on which we will focus our efforts.



This work will be underpinned by strong foundations.



## Excellent education

- We will speak out to stop autistic children and young people being left out and left behind as they return to full-time education during the coronavirus outbreak. We will amplify the voices of autistic children and young people and their parents and carers, drawing on our experience as an education provider and a national charity.
- We will continue to provide high-quality and safe education services, as we use and embed our Ambitious Approach. We will continue to adapt and continually improve our approach in light of the coronavirus pandemic.
- We will develop ways of enhancing learning and careers education through the innovative use of digital technology.

- We will put the necessary steps in place to expand our direct education services in the south of England. We will do this by pursuing opportunities to develop new free schools or providing sponsorship for school transfers and considering other partnership opportunities.

## Employment and enterprise

- We will establish Employ Autism as the umbrella programme under which all our employability activities are consolidated. The Employ Autism programme will be adapted and offered across three regions over the next year.
- We will continue to offer our current supported internship programme.

- We will continue to develop the careers education we offer pupils and learners in our education settings. We will also work to improve careers education for all autistic children and young people by providing online information and support, and our training programme for careers professionals nationally.

## Family and relationships

- We will expand our Learner and Family Support service for autistic children and young people, and their families, within our education settings. This service will provide support in responding to the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.
- We will develop information and support to empower parents, carers and other family members of autistic children and young people across the UK. This information will be available through existing and new digital services.
- We will continue to support pupils and learners in our schools and college to make a successful transition to work and adult life, as part of their communities. We will develop our model for use as an exemplar to others.

## Health and wellbeing

- We will improve access to physical and mental health support and services in our education settings for pupils and learners, and their parents or carers. Working with strategic partners, we want to improve the experience of autistic children and young people in accessing health services.

- We will develop best practice guidance and influence decision-makers in the health system. We will develop the information and guidance we produce, as well as partnerships to promote the mental health of children and young people with autism, and their parents or carers.

## Active citizenship in the community

- We want to develop our services so that we can integrate them within local communities. Considering the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, we will adapt our approach to ensure that our services are accessible and relevant to the communities they aim to serve.
- We will develop a youth participation strategy and, subject to funding, expand our Ambitious Youth Network. We want to create a safe and trusted space for peer support, to access information and empower autistic young people to campaign for more inclusive communities.



## Strong foundations

Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan.

- Co-production and taking a user-centred approach will be central to the way we work. We will take into account the views of autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and our partners in planning, governance, external influencing and developing services and activities.
- We will continue to respond to the coronavirus pandemic through our crisis management, financial planning, wellbeing, and health and safety systems, and across our support services.
- We will continue to carefully manage our financial position, including treasury management, to ensure the sustainability of our organisation.

- We will continue our work with existing partners, while also building our supporter base. We will diversify our fundraising activities, working closely with our supporters and partners.
- We will further develop our approach to learning, development and talent management for our staff and act as an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will continue to strengthen our marketing and communications to provide trusted information supported by a robust content and digital marketing strategy.
- We will continue to implement our IT strategy, support remote and mobile learning and working, and make better use of technology currently in place.
- We will further improve how we store and manage our data, and how we communicate with supporters, while continuing to maintain high standards of data protection compliance.

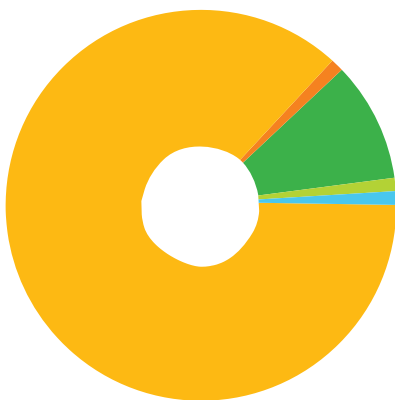


# Financial review

Our total income for the year was £20.0m and our overall expenditure £19.2m, giving us a net income of £0.8m for the year. Taking into account net losses on our investment and pension position, there was a positive net movement in funds of £0.6m, taking net assets at 31 August 2020 to £15.3m, compared with net assets of £14.7m at 31 August 2019.

## Income

**£20.0 million**



### Income:

- **£17.7m**  
Charitable activities: education services
- **£0.1m**  
Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£2.0m**  
Gifts and donated service
- **£0.1m**  
Investments
- **£0.1m**  
Other income

## Expenditure

**£19.2 million**



### How our money was spent:

- **£17.1m**  
Charitable activities: education services
- **£1.2m**  
Charitable activities: external affairs
- **£0.9m**  
Raising funds

## Financial performance

This good financial performance is attributed to the growth in learner and pupil numbers at Ambitious College, TreeHouse School and The Rise School, as well as the generosity of our partners and supporters. The coronavirus pandemic created financial uncertainty in the year, to which we responded with careful cost management and launching a successful fundraising appeal. These measures allowed us to create a designated coronavirus fund of £0.6m, which will help us manage the future financial uncertainties in relation to the continuing impact of the pandemic. We also secured longer-term financing of £1m to boost liquidity in these uncertain times. Our total expenditure for the year was £19.2m, an increase of £1m in comparison to 2019 (£18.2m).

In line with this positive financial performance, our free reserves for the year are £1.9m, which are within, but at the lower end of, our reserves parameter of £1.7m–£2.5m. During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold improvements, £0.1m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on website development and £0.2m on computer equipment as we equipped our staff, pupils and learners to work and learn from home. The investment portfolio performed in line with the benchmark during the year and was valued at £1.6m as at 31 August 2020, taking into account an unrealised loss of £0.1m.

## Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the board of trustees in July 2020. It aims to produce the best financial return at 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 once a year. The trustees have set a

target return of inflation (CPI) +3%, averaged over three to five years, which was not achieved in the year, because of the unrealised losses on investments.

## Investment risk management

As at year end we held £1.6m in listed securities (£1.7m, 2018–19).

The portfolio is diversified across a range of instruments to reduce the risk of overexposure to one type of asset. We hold the following instruments: fixed interest, direct UK and overseas equities, cash and property and managed funds. Note 12 provides further analysis of these assets (see p84).

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the Charity, currently Rathbone Brothers Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £26.9m in 2019. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

## Risk management practices

Members of the investment committee meet the investment manager at least twice a year to review performance and discuss market risks. The investment committee reports to the trustees on the risk profile, selection of investment managers and returns achieved.

## Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds, designated funds and any parts of unrestricted funds not readily available, such as 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. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in November 2020.

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 – £2.5m. As at 31 August 2020, free reserves were £1.9m. 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 £5.6m as at 31 August 2020.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £4.1m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis, of which £0.7m is planned depreciation expenditure for 2020–21.
- Cyclical Maintenance Fund – a sinking fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs, was established for major repairs to the Pears National Centre for Autism Education. As at 31 August 2020, there was £0.7m in this fund.
- School Development Fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2020.
- Coronavirus Fund – a fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income. This will continue in the coming year (2020–21) as we continue to operate and manage during the pandemic, covering the additional costs of cleaning, PPE, additional venue hire to facilitate physical

distancing, staff cover for those who need to isolate, and supporting remote learning and working.

- Transformation Fund – a fund totalling £0.2m at 31 August 2020, which has been established to support the work of the new strategy.

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; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including the set-up of the sixth form. Funds balances as at 31 August 2020 totalled £6.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £2.2m of restricted funds, a £1.6m pension liability and £6.3m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2020, excluding the pension deficit, totalled £8.5m.

The £1.6m pension deficit is increasing, resulting in year-on-year unrealised losses, which is at risk of increasing further in the future. In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, the deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the DfE. We also monitor the pension scheme carefully and in 2020 a review of the LGPS was undertaken to provide assurance to trustees that the set-up of the scheme was appropriate and being correctly administered.

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can

be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies. While there have been some challenges in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the trust has continued to ensure all pupils continue to learn and that the situation is managed well.

In response to the uncertainties from the coronavirus pandemic, six month capital holiday repayments were secured for all of our existing long-term loans (Futurebuilders, NatWest £1.1m tranche and NatWest £1.9m tranche). Delaying our loan capital repayments by six months helped ensure that there was sufficient cash to continue operating in case of delayed payments from customers, while the longer-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic was assessed. This continues to be assessed, monitoring the financial and operational impact.

## Risks and uncertainties

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the board of trustees, which was reviewed and updated in March 2021.

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-effective
- 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 finance and resources committee (FRC) 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 termly by the FRC and board, with the actions taken or proposed to manage them.

The table below identifies the three key strategic risks that have been identified by the board of trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.

**Risk**

**Mitigation**

**1**  
**Coronavirus:**

That the coronavirus pandemic adversely affects our operations, has a negative impact on our financial position, including cash flow, and has a negative effect on staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.

Our coronavirus response team, which includes the executive leadership team, is carefully managing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and is minimising the negative impact on the charity through risk mitigation and forward planning, including a number of initiatives to promote staff, pupil and learner wellbeing.

**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 then affects our ability to plan.

To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process. We also host 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 on our ability to raise funds, which we depend on for other impactful projects across Ambitious about Autism.

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

# Our approach to fundraising

## Fundraising practices

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

We pay the voluntary levy to register 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 Chartered Institute of Fundraising. We maintain up-to-date policies for our 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 compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation.

In the year under review and beyond, there have been no instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice.

A company contracted to provide auction support at our gala event went out of business at the start of the pandemic crisis in 2020. Like several charities affected, this has meant we have not yet received all funds due. We raised this as a serious incident with the Charity Commission, which decided not to investigate. We notified all guests at the event, which led to a single complaint about involving a third party in handling their donation, which was satisfactorily resolved.

No other complaints have been received by us regarding fundraising activities in the year ended 31 August 2020.

As a charity set up to protect and champion vulnerable people, we consider it important that these values are echoed in our fundraising. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with donors, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

## Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with individuals who have an interest in our cause, as well as trusts, foundations and corporate partners. We have also benefitted from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in challenge events and attendees at our annual gala event; Night of Ambition.

In partnership with TalkTalk, we were fortunate to benefit from another successful Night of Ambition in November 2019. As before, TalkTalk sold tickets and helped with auction items, while all materials for the event and fundraising activities were designed and monitored by the Ambitious about Autism team.

Unfortunately, most challenge events and community fundraising activities were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are grateful to those supporters who took part in the 2.6 Challenge - the online fundraising event organised by the team behind the Virgin Money London Marathon. For these fundraisers, we have continued to use the services of online fundraising platforms JustGiving and VirginMoneyGiving, ensuring that these platforms remain compliant and meet high standards.

Like many other organisations, we are continuing to manage the challenges and uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the increasingly challenging fundraising environment and the diversification of the fundraising strategy, fundraising expenditure is higher; we have made additional investments to set the foundation for our fundraising work in the future, to ensure that opportunities are grasped and that 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 conducted primarily with our close community, and one small Christmas appeal to a selection of supporters. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.

# Legal structures and governance

## Governance

Ambitious about Autism (The Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 25 May 1997 (company number 03375255) 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 (The Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a 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 trust is governed by a board of trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the trust along with four individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted during the year and changes were made to the governance structure, which took effect from 13 December 2019. The governance review was supported by an external facilitator and had a remit to streamline and strengthen governance arrangements across the group. This included the board and committee structure and membership; with updated articles, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references being put in place. The work was informed by interviews and questionnaires completed by trustees and members of the executive leadership team, and appropriate legal advice was taken at each stage. The proposals from the governance review were then reviewed and approved by the DfE, in relation to the trust.

The new governance structure also resulted in changes to the company members of the trust. Until 12 December 2019, the four members were Ambitious about Autism, the chair of Ambitious about Autism, the chair of the trust and the chief executive. Under the new governance arrangements, there are five members: Ambitious about Autism and four individuals who are trustees of Ambitious about Autism.

As a result of the new governance structure, the Joint Group Board Committee was created, and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust became members of this from 13 December 2019. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. The aim is to maximise efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation have been approved by both boards.

Both boards of trustees follow a regular cycle of termly meetings and have at least one awayday with the executive leadership team each year, as well as holding additional meetings when required.

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees, which since the 13 December 2019 restructure have been as set out below.

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee renewal, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the executive leadership team and staff across the charity and the trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) 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 the charity and the trust.

- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for our education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, which reports to the FRC, monitors the performance of the charity's investment portfolio and meets twice per year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets annually in November, and termly from 2021, to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with DfE legislation for the trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies.

Management of the charity and the trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the trust, and the executive leadership team. They attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25, as at 31 August 2020. 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 the trust is to build a diverse 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 the trust, including on 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, followed by ongoing training as required.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts (see p80).

## Charity Governance Code

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees.

Areas of focus in 2019–20 were:

- **Board effectiveness:** During 2019–20, a formal governance review was conducted with changes to the governance structure being implemented in December 2019,

resulting in changes to the committee structure, and various updates to board filings such as articles (please see above for further details).

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making. We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and also on the board of trustees is of benefit to the charity. The board is committed to investing in its diversity through future recruitment.

## Our people

Our skilled and dedicated staff and volunteers are vital to achieving our mission and vision and living our values. We are committed to being a great organisation to work and volunteer for.

It is critical that we attract, motivate, develop and retain staff and volunteers with the right skills, talents and knowledge so that we can run the charity as efficiently and effectively as possible.

As part of the Ambitious Futures 2020 strategy, we continued our focus on investment in recruitment, development and retention, and ensuring that managers have the skills and capabilities to lead and manage to a high standard.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the health and wellbeing of our staff, pupils and learners was our utmost priority. We supported our staff to work from home, in line with government guidance, which allowed us to



operate better social distancing for staff at our schools and college to provide education to autistic children and young people.

We developed a homeworking charter and wellbeing resources, including online physiotherapy, yoga, resilience training, regular supervisions, and guidance for managers to support teams working remotely.

We are enormously grateful for the dedication, high standards, and care of everyone who works at Ambitious about Autism.

### **The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)**

From April to August 2020, we furloughed a few charity staff members, claiming a total of £118k through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in line with government guidance. After the year-end, we continued to furlough staff members on an operational basis and to meet our resourcing requirements.

## **Engagement with staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders**

### **Employee engagement**

Our staff are fundamental to the success of Ambitious about Autism and the delivery of our strategic aims. We must attract, retain and motivate employees. From ensuring that we remain a responsible employer, to considering pay and benefits, and our health, safety and workplace environment, our executive leadership team considers the impact of its decisions on employees, wherever this is feasible.

We regularly engage and communicate with staff, using a range of methods, including whole staff and team face-to-face meetings and briefings, newsletters, senior management team cascades and management meetings.

During the coronavirus pandemic, our internal communications were targeted, timely and relevant. We provided emergency updates through line managers, emails and team meetings as appropriate.

In our 2020 annual survey, 96% of staff said they were proud to be part of Ambitious about Autism (compared to 95.7% in 2019). When asked about coronavirus communications, 96% of staff said the updates were clear. We are proud that, across the group, 97% of staff understand our vision, mission and values.

We have a staff council, with representatives from across the organisation. The council meets regularly to share the views of staff on decisions regarding people, policies and practices. The council also contributes to the continuing improvement of the organisation and our working environment.

Our employees are consulted on issues through staff meetings and kept informed on specific matters directly by managers. We have adopted a procedure of upward feedback for senior managers and the trustees. We've also established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of all staff.

We celebrate and recognise our successes as a whole staff team each year.

We encourage the involvement of staff across the organisation 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 for safeguarding, whistleblowing and data protection. We engage with and update staff on our performance during the year.

### **Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship**

We have a strong commitment to paying all suppliers within agreed terms.

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders. Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

We continue to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to ensure outcomes are mutually beneficial, with our pupils, learners and stakeholders continuing to be our core focus. We work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with our wider stakeholders, including our funders and supporters.

### **S172 statement**

The executive leadership team and board make assessments and decisions in good faith, considering the potential consequence on stakeholders. In addition, they consider the expected outcomes most likely to promote the success of Ambitious about Autism. The benefit of our pupils, learners and stakeholders is always paramount.

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The likely consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings, and individual monthly supervisions.
- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.

### **Remuneration policy for key management personnel**

The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This

includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff. The group which comprises trustees and an external expert, meets each term. The committee makes recommendations to the board of trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy, which sets out our approach to pay for our executive leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

**“Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for AaA/AaAST. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable.”**

The executive pay policy aims to follow a robust evidence-based process to achieve this principle.

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XperthHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.

- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis.
- Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academies Financial Handbook.
- Take account of the difference between executive leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

### **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 that applicants with disabilities are considered fully and fairly, 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 in the person specification.

We work to ensure that all staff, including those with disabilities, have the appropriate 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, including those who become 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.

**Equality, diversity and inclusion: living our values**

We proudly value and embrace difference at Ambitious about Autism, but we know there is more we can all do. As Chief Executive, Jolanta Lasota publicly signed up to the sector-wide initiative to address the diversity deficit in charity leadership.

One of our core values is that ‘we value difference’. We are ambitious in name and this includes ambition in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It is part of our core purpose to be an organisation that champions and supports diversity. Race is an integral part of this that needs far greater attention. We serve and work with people from all backgrounds and we are motivated and energised by the opportunity to improve outcomes for everybody in our charity, education sectors and wider society.

In 2020, we committed to achieve meaningful and lasting change around EDI through a proactive and comprehensive approach that:

- is embedded throughout our organisation and strategy

- is championed by our board and leadership teams
- takes into account people’s views and experiences and the external context
- must result in a range of actions that deliver clear and measurable benefits, which are reviewed, appraised and reported to our key stakeholders.

**Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting**

**Energy and carbon consumption**

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) is the new legislative reporting requirement from 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown is as follows:

	Gas	Electricity	Transport	Total
kWh	504,439	548,610	40,745	1,093,794
Mileage	N/A	N/A	47,970	47,970
tCO2e	97	139	120	356

**Intensity metric**

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number service users (pupils and learners), with 274 members emitting on average 1.30 kgCO2e each. This will be measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

Number of service users	274
tCO2e	356
2019–20	<b>1.30</b>

## Ambitious about Autism initiatives

This section highlights energy and carbon improvement projects undertaken during the year or those that are currently under way.

Monitoring mileage underpins good fleet management and should be more than a data collection exercise. Reducing mileage reduces costs and emissions, and technology solutions will make the process easier and more accurate. We've already secured voluntary funding towards the purchase of two new vehicles, of which one was bought in this financial year, enabling us to replace two aging vehicles and achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs. We continue to focus on our fleet management.

### Calculations

The following figures were used to convert energy to CO<sub>2</sub> figures:

	Litre	CO <sub>2</sub> e
Gas	NA	0.18387 or 0.2331 per tonne
Electricity	NA	0.23314 or 0.289 per tonne
Fuel	<b>9.1kwh per litre</b>	0.28369 per tonne

## Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting details of all the people we work with and who support us. 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 4–19 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 UK 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, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

Our education provisions are co-located at Springwest Academy (part of the Tudor Park Education Trust), West Thames College and The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London.

All the 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.

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the trust. Therefore, the results of AaAST are consolidated into these group financial statements.

AaAST has been chosen to open a new special free school for autistic children and young people in Kingston and is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools.

# Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism 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 2020 was nine (2019: nine). The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

## Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

**Neil Goulden**

(Chair)

**Lesley Longstone**

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

**Paul Disley-Tindell**

(Trustee and Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee)

**Elizabeth Stanton**

(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

**Phillippa Stobbs**

(Trustee and Chair of the TreeHouse School Governing Body, until 31 August 2020)

**Koral Anderson**

(until 12 December 2019)

**Jonathan Andrews**

**Martyn Craddock**

(Trustee until 18 September 2020 and Chair of the TreeHouse School Governing Body from 1 September 2020)

**Alison Halsey**

(from 7 October 2019)

**Alistair MacCallum**

(from 7 October 2019)

**Charlotte Warner**

(until 12 December 2019)

## Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

### **Neil Goulden**

(Vice Chair until 12 December 2019, Chair from 13 December 2019)

### **Lesley Longstone**

(Chair until 12 December 2019, Vice Chair from 13 December 2019)

### **Koral Anderson**

(Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee from 13 December 2019 until 31 December 2020)

### **Michael Clark**

(appointed 7 October 2019 and Chair of the Audit Committee from 1 January 2021)

### **Tanith Dodge**

(appointed 7 October 2019)

### **Joanna Healey**

### **Jolanta Lasota**

(until 20 April 2020)

### **Lucy Nutt**

### **Elizabeth Stanton**

(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)

### **Charlotte Warner**

## Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

### **Ambitious about Autism**

### **Martyn Craddock**

(from 13 December 2019)

### **Paul Disley-Tindell**

(from 13 December 2019)

### **Neil Goulden**

(until 12 December 2019)

### **Alison Halsey**

(from 13 December 2019)

### **Jolanta Lasota**

(until 12 December 2019)

### **Lesley Longstone**

(until 12 December 2019)

### **Alistair MacCallum**

(from 13 December 2019)

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 CBE**

**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**



## Autism Professionals Lifetime Achievement Award

### Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

Dr Virginia Bovell is the mother of Danny, 25, who has autism and severe learning disabilities. She was one of the founding parents of TreeHouse School and Ambitious about Autism. She is now one of our Vice Presidents. Dr Bovell was recognised at the Autism Professionals Awards in March 2020 for her policy and campaigning work in relation to autism and special educational needs, and for contributing to several national guidance documents, including the NICE guideline on the management of autism in children and young people.

## Youth Patrons

<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>Rayhan</b>	<b>Aishah</b>	<b>Trinny</b>
<b>Grace</b>	<b>Saffron</b>	<b>Patrick</b>	<b>Olivia</b>
<b>Kieran</b>	<b>Emily</b>	<b>Josef</b>	
<b>Dominic</b>	<b>Josefina</b>	<b>Lucy</b>	

## Youth Ambassadors

**Jack Welch**

**Sam Chown-Ahern**

**Jasmine Bigden**

**Kerrie Portman**

## 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, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

<b>Judith Barnard</b>	<b>Prof Patricia Howlin</b>	<b>Mark Schmid</b>
<b>Sir Simon Baron-Cohen</b>	<b>Jonathan Meth</b>	<b>Dr Rowie Shaw OBE</b>
<b>Steve Broach</b>	<b>Dr Emran Mian OBE</b>	<b>Fiona Slomovic</b>
<b>Leo Capella</b>	<b>David Nicholson</b>	<b>Su Thomas</b>
<b>Prof Tony Charman</b>	<b>Nick Peacey</b>	<b>Richard Townley</b>
<b>Prof Richard Hastings</b>	<b>Prof Liz Pellicano</b>	<b>Gaby Zein</b>

## 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**

**Lucy Mottram**

**Simon 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:

**Rt Hon John Bercow MP**

(retired 31 October 2019)

**Sally Bercow**

(retired 31 October 2019)

**Nicky Clark**

**Claire Coombe-Tennant**

**John Coombe-Tennant**

**Matthew Davis**

**Keith Duffy**

**Eliza Mishcon**

**Charlotte Moore**

**Claire Ryan**

**Sophie Walker**

## Employ Autism Development Board

**Chair** Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

### Members

**Laurie Edmans CBE**

**Chris Pond**

**Tristia Harrison**

**Alistair MacCallum**

**Koral Anderson**

**Sue Adkins**

**Matt Hutnell**

## Executive Leadership Team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the executive leadership team:

**Jolanta Lasota**

Chief Executive

**Vivienne Berkeley**

Executive Principal

**Paul Breckell**

Deputy Chief Executive

**Danae Leaman-Hill**

Director of Fundraising and Development

**Louise Posocco**

Director of Finance and Planning, and  
Company Secretary

**Zoe Weaver**

Director of People

**Harry Wilkinson**

Director of Service Development

**Alison Worsley**

Director of External Affairs

## Independent auditor

**RSM UK Audit LLP**

25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

## Bankers

**National Westminster Bank Plc**

13 Market Place Reading,  
Berkshire RG1 2EP

**Nationwide Building Society**

Nationwide House, Pipers Way  
Swindon, Wiltshire SN38 1NW

**CAF Bank Limited**

25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill,  
West Malling ME19 4JQ

## Solicitors

**Stone King LLP**

13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

**Farrer & Co LLP**

66 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Holborn,  
London WC2A 3LH

## Investment managers

**Rathbone Brothers Public  
Limited Company**

8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ

# The statement of trustees' responsibilities

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 as at the balance sheet date, 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 Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent

- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards 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 maintaining proper 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.

## Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

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 also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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

## Auditor

The appointment of our new auditors, RSM UK Audit LLP, was made on 5 June 2020 following a tender process supported by trustees.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the board of trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the board of trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 26 March 2021 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 2020, which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and 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 FRS 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 the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2020 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.

## Basis for opinion

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

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 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 financial statements is not appropriate
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the group's or 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 annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the 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 financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the 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 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' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have 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 Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 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

- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made
- 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 on p67, the trustees (who are also the directors of the 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 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 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

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.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at [frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## 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. 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.

**Hannah Catchpool**  
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of RSM UK AUDIT LLP,  
Statutory Auditor  
Chartered Accountants  
25 Farringdon Street  
London  
EC4A 4AB

Date:



## Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2020

	For the year ended 31 August 2020					For the year ended 31 August 2019	
	Note	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000	Total £'000
		Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000		
<b>Income from:</b>							
<b>Donations and legacies:</b>							
Gifts and donated services	2	637	1,283	1,920	111	2,031	1,975
<b>Charitable activities:</b>							
Educational services	3	13,113	105	13,218	4,453	17,671	16,542
External affairs	3	-	103	103	-	103	101
<b>Other income:</b>							
Trading income		56	7	63	-	63	93
Investment income		53	-	53	-	53	66
CJRS income		118	-	118	-	118	-
<b>Total income</b>		<b>13,977</b>	<b>1,498</b>	<b>15,475</b>	<b>4,564</b>	<b>20,039</b>	<b>18,777</b>
<b>Expenditure on raising funds:</b>							
Fundraising activities		936	-	936	-	936	952
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	12	12
		<b>948</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>964</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>							
Educational services		12,934	497	13,431	3,621	17,052	16,041
External affairs		745	494	1,239	-	1,239	1,163
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14,627</b>	<b>991</b>	<b>15,618</b>	<b>3,621</b>	<b>19,239</b>	<b>18,168</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)</b>		<b>(650)</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>(143)</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>609</b>
Net (losses)/gains on investments		(90)	-	(90)	-	(90)	53
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	(122)	(122)	(312)
<b>Net (expenditure)/income</b>		<b>(740)</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>(233)</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>350</b>
Transfers between and from funds	19	583	(132)	451	(451)	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>(157)</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>							
Total funds brought forward	19	7,633	534	8,167	6,566	14,733	14,383
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7,476</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>8,385</b>	<b>6,936</b>	<b>15,321</b>	<b>14,733</b>

## Balance sheets

### As at 31 August 2020

Company number: 03375255

	Note	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
		31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
<b>Fixed assets:</b>					
Tangible assets	10	16,846	17,262	10,546	10,839
Investments	12	1,644	1,750	1,644	1,750
Intangible assets	11	66	19	66	19
		<b>18,556</b>	<b>19,031</b>	<b>12,256</b>	<b>12,608</b>
<b>Current assets:</b>					
Debtors	13	803	867	723	765
Cash at bank and in hand		6,095	2,414	3,758	1,335
Short-term deposits		13	1,504	8	1,002
		<b>6,911</b>	<b>4,785</b>	<b>4,489</b>	<b>3,102</b>
<b>Liabilities:</b>					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(2,804)	(2,932)	(2,595)	(2,574)
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>4,107</b>	<b>1,853</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>528</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>22,663</b>	<b>20,884</b>	<b>14,150</b>	<b>13,136</b>
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	(5,765)	(4,969)	(5,765)	(4,969)
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	(1,577)	(1,182)	-	-
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15,321</b>	<b>14,733</b>	<b>8,385</b>	<b>8,167</b>
<b>Funds</b>					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		909	534	909	534
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		6,936	6,566	-	-
<b>Total restricted funds</b>		<b>7,845</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>534</b>
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		5,578	5,219	5,578	5,219
General funds		1,898	2,414	1,898	2,414
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>		<b>7,476</b>	<b>7,633</b>	<b>7,476</b>	<b>7,633</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15,321</b>	<b>14,733</b>	<b>8,385</b>	<b>8,167</b>

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 26 March 2021 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 2020

	Note	For the year ended 31 August 2020		For the year ended 31 August 2019	
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		1,949		966
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>					
Dividends and interest from investments		53		66	
Interest payable		(107)		(113)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		(512)		(616)	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		269		192	
Change on cash held for investment		34		(56)	
Purchase of investments		(287)		(123)	
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>			(550)		(650)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>					
Purchase of new loans		1,000		-	
Repayments of borrowing		(209)		(371)	
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>			791		(371)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents</b>			2,190		(55)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			3,918		3,973
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>			6,108		3,918
<b>Cash and cash equivalents consists of:</b>					
Cash at bank and in hand			6,095		2,414
Short-term deposits			13		1,504
			6,108		3,918

Net debt reconciliation	At the start of the year	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
	£'000		£'000	£'000
Cash	2,414	3,681	-	6,095
Cash equivalents	1,504	(1,491)	-	13
Loans falling due within one year	(378)	5	-	(373)
Loans falling due after more than one year	(4,969)	204	(1,000)	(5,765)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,429)</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>(1,000)</b>	<b>(30)</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. 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 2019) – (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.

The financial statements are presented in sterling (£).

The accounts are rounded to the nearest thousand (£'000).

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

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of AaAST. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the 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 2020 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. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

Two loans have been acquired, £500k from Natwest and £500k from Rathbones, to provide sufficient liquidity. A designated Covid fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income. The financial forecast and assumptions for the financial year 2020-21 have taken into account the financial impact of Covid-19, and due to pupil and learner numbers exceeding budgeted levels, the additional costs of Covid-19 have been offset. The ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 will continue to be monitored over the course of the year.

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 for a period of a least 12 months from sign-off.

##### 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 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.

Grant income relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is recognised under the accrual model. There are no unfulfilled conditions or other contingencies relating to the grant, and there have been no other forms of government assistance from which the entity has directly benefited in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in the year.

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 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.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 1. Accounting policies (continued)

- 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 provides 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.

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 or groups of items 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 freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

Freehold land and building at Woodside Avenue	50 years
Long leasehold	50 years
Short and long leasehold improvements	over the lease term
Computer equipment	3 years
Educational, office furniture and equipment	3–10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years

#### m. Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets are measured at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Software development costs are recognised as an intangible asset when all of the following criteria are demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the software so that it will be available for use or sale
- the intention to complete the software and use or sell it
- the ability to use the software or to sell it
- how the software will generate probable future economic benefits
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the development and to use or sell the software
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the software during its development.

Amortisation is charged so as to allocate the cost of intangibles less their residual values over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The intangible assets are amortised over the following useful economic lives:

Software development costs	3 years
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#### n. 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.

#### o. 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.

#### p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents 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.

#### q. Short-term deposits

Short-term deposits include liquid investments with a maturity of three to 12 months from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

#### r. 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.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 1. Accounting policies (continued)

##### s. Financial instruments

The group has financial assets and financial liabilities only 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.

##### t. 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 three 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 17.

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.

#### u. Significant judgements and estimates

##### Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group's accounting policies, the directors are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

##### Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are as follows:

- **Depreciation:** fixed assets are depreciated over the assets, expected useful life.
- **Pensions:** the pension liability is sensitive to movements in actuarial assumptions such as discount rate, mortality and inflation. Further details are set out in note 17.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 2. Income from donations and legacies

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	580	1,283	1,863	111	1,974
Donated services	57	-	57	-	57
	<b>637</b>	<b>1,283</b>	<b>1,920</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>2,031</b>

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

#### 3. Income from charitable activities

	For the year ended 31 August 2020				
	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	
Local authorities	11,246	38	11,284	3,362	14,646
Education and Skills Funding Agency	1,867	67	1,934	1,091	3,025
<b>Sub total for educational services</b>	<b>13,113</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>13,218</b>	<b>4,453</b>	<b>17,671</b>
Autism Education Trust	-	103	103	-	103
<b>Sub total for external affairs</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Total income from charitable activities</b>	<b>13,113</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>13,321</b>	<b>4,453</b>	<b>17,774</b>

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

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'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 2020 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	482	355	-	-	-	7	-	93	11	948
Educational services	8,379	738	1	-	-	601	-	3,415	297	13,431
External affairs	787	257	-	-	-	22	-	153	20	1,239
	<b>9,648</b>	<b>1,350</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,661</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>15,618</b>
Support costs	1,589	236	778	387	131	526	14	(3,661)	-	-
Governance costs	280	29	-	-	-	1	18	-	(328)	-
<b>Sub total Ambitious about Autism costs</b>	<b>1,869</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>(3,661)</b>	<b>(328)</b>	<b>-</b>
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,704	747	-	-	-	170	-	-	-	3,621
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>14,221</b>	<b>2,362</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>1,327</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19,239</b>

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 6) £'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
	<b>9,027</b>	<b>1,708</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,583</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>15,120</b>
Support costs	1,360	150	806	565	161	520	21	(3,583)	-	-
Governance costs	214	22	-	-	-	-	62	-	(298)	-
<b>Sub total Ambitious about Autism costs</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>(3,583)</b>	<b>(298)</b>	<b>-</b>
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	2,097	781	-	-	-	170	-	-	-	3,048
<b>Total expenditure 2019</b>	<b>12,698</b>	<b>2,661</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>1,194</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,168</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Depreciation and amortisation	882	852
Interest payable	107	113
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	21	12
Ambitious about Autism	24	14
Other services	1	4
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	135	103
Equipment	21	14

#### 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 2020 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
Salaries and wages	12,179	11,056
Social security costs	1,122	990
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	599	386
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	321	266
	<b>14,221</b>	<b>12,698</b>

Redundancy costs of £3,228 were paid in the year (2019: £nil) with no other severance payments made.

The number of employees who received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) fell within the following bands:

	For the year ended 31 August 2020 £'000	For year ended 31 August 2019 £'000
£60,000–£69,999	3	5
£70,000–£79,999	4	3
£80,000–£89,999	2	4
£90,000–£99,999	2	2
£100,000–£109,999	1	0
£110,000–£119,999	2	1
£130,000–£139,999	0	1

The number of the employees in the above bandings during 2018/19 have been restated to exclude employer's National Insurance contributions.

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

The total employee benefits including employer pension and National Insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £1,289,537 for the 12-month period to 31 August 2020 (2019: £950,117).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £115,000 to 31 August 2020 (2019: £111,100).

The charity trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2019: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2019: £nil).

Trustees did not claim any expenses for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs in 2020 (2019: £nil).

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 7. Staff numbers

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

	For the year ended 31 August 2020	Restated for the year ended 31 August 2019
	No.	No.
Raising funds	11	11
Educational services	395	362
External affairs	19	18
Support	35	33
	<b>460</b>	<b>424</b>

The increase of staff numbers is due to the planned growth across educational services.

#### 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 £6,012 (2019: £9,492) of office furniture from Assman Office Furniture during the year. Assman Office Furniture is managed by the partner of Vivienne Berkeley, executive principal. At the balance sheet date, the amount has been fully paid leaving a nil creditor balance (2019: nil).

Charlotte Warner, a trustee of the trust, is also the Chair of Tudor Park Education Trust, which runs Springwest Academy. The Rise School holds a contract with Tudor Park Education Trust with respect to the procurement of curriculum placements, provision of caretaker services, grounds maintenance and the car park. During the year, the trust made payments totalling £29k (2019: £54k) to the Tudor Park Education Trust. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust entered a 125-year lease with Tudor Park Education Trust commencing on 19 May 2015 for the site shared with Springwest Academy and pays a peppercorn rent to Tudor Park Education Trust.

The vice chair of the board of trustees for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust and the chair of the Education Committee, 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 (2019: £nil); however, Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust did receive grant income totalling £1,091k (2019: £898k) and Ambitious about Autism £1,934k (2019: £1,803k) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, an executive agency sponsored by the Department of Education.

During the year trustees or donated personally through entities where they have significant control a total of £44,792 (2019: £40,175) to the charity. Of these, £41,355 (2019: nil) were restricted to the Emergency Coronavirus Appeal. The remainder were unrestricted.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Limited. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building, which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £2,360 (2019: nil)

#### 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 2020

#### 10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>							
At the start of the year	11,770	6,550	1,728	556	1,339	156	22,099
Additions in the year	94	-	1	83	245	31	454
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	-	(489)	(21)	(510)
At the end of the year	11,864	6,550	1,729	639	1,095	166	22,043
<b>Depreciation</b>							
At the start of the year	2,563	452	372	374	946	130	4,837
Charge for the year	242	138	183	75	225	7	870
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	-	(489)	(21)	(510)
At the end of the year	2,805	590	555	449	682	116	5,197
<b>Net book value</b>							
At the end of the year	9,059	5,960	1,174	190	413	50	16,846
At the start of the year	9,207	6,098	1,356	182	393	26	17,262

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>						
At the start of the year	11,770	1,580	392	1,075	156	14,973
Additions in the year	94	-	62	175	31	362
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	(382)	(21)	(403)
At the end of the year	11,864	1,580	454	868	166	14,932
<b>Depreciation</b>						
At the start of the year	2,563	372	305	764	130	4,134
Charge for the year	242	168	43	195	7	655
Disposals in the year	-	-	-	(382)	(21)	(403)
At the end of the year	2,805	540	348	577	116	4,386
<b>Net book value</b>						
At the end of the year	9,059	1,040	106	291	50	10,546
At the start of the year	9,207	1,208	87	311	26	10,839

Land with a cost of £834,000 (2019: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated. The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

2018–19 figures have been restated due to the separation of intangible computer software costs (note 11).

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>		
At the start of the year	26	26
Additions in the year	59	59
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	85	85
<b>Amortisation</b>		
At the start of the year	7	7
Charge for the year	12	12
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	19	19
<b>Net book value</b>		
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>At the start of the year</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>		
At the start of the year	26	26
Additions in the year	59	59
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	85	85
<b>Amortisation</b>		
At the start of the year	7	7
Charge for the year	12	12
Disposals in the year	-	-
At the end of the year	19	19
<b>Net book value</b>		
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>At the start of the year</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	1,662	1,678
Additions at cost	287	123
Disposal proceeds	(269)	(192)
(Net loss)/gain on change in fair value	(90)	53
Market value at the end of the year	1,590	1,662
Cash held in investments	54	88
<b>Total investments held</b>	<b>1,644</b>	<b>1,750</b>

Investments comprise:	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
<b>Listed securities</b>		
Fixed interest	278	279
Direct UK equities	530	594
Direct overseas equities	548	567
Alternatives – property and managed funds	234	222
Cash held for reinvestment	48	79
Cash	6	9
<b>Market value at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,644</b>	<b>1,750</b>

The historical cost of investments is £1,388k (2019: £1,426k).

#### 13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Trade debtors	348	322	332	347
Amounts owed by group undertakings	-	-	63	-
Other debtors	144	139	22	19
Prepayments	195	296	190	292
Accrued income	116	110	116	107
	<b>803</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>765</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Bank loans	373	378	373	378
Amounts owed to group undertakings	-	-	5	-
Trade creditors	320	389	296	305
Taxation and social security	397	342	365	311
Other creditors	179	120	156	154
Accruals	396	599	323	348
Deferred income (note 15)	1,139	1,104	1,077	1,078
	<b>2,804</b>	<b>2,932</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>2,574</b>

#### 15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
<b>Deferred income comprises fees received in advance:</b>				
Balance at the beginning of the year	1,104	1,176	1,078	1,176
Amount released to income in the year	(1,104)	(1,176)	(1,078)	(1,176)
Amount deferred in the year	1,139	1,104	1,077	1,078
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>1,104</b>	<b>1,077</b>	<b>1,078</b>

Deferred income as at 31 August 2020 relates to autumn 2020 term fees that were received in advance of the new academic year.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 16. Creditors: amounts falling due after one year

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold land and buildings	4,480	3,638
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,285	1,331
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>5,765</b>	<b>4,969</b>

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 NatWest, 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. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbone Brothers and the other £500k from NatWest, with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years, and the Rathbone Brothers loan is repayable in five years.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	218	1,076	1,622
NatWest £1.1m tranche	47	212	589
NatWest £1.9m tranche	89	377	909
NatWest £500k	19	82	399
Rathbones £500k	-	500	-
	<b>373</b>	<b>2,247</b>	<b>3,519</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 17. Pension schemes

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

Contributions to these schemes were £921k (2019: £652k).

#### 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 and 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. 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 £218,100m, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £196,100m giving a notional past service deficit of £22,000m
- the SCAPE rate, set by HM Treasury, is used to determine the notional investment return.

The current SCAPE rate is 2.4% above the rate of CPI. 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 including earnings growth is 4.45%. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

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 is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 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.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaA in the year amounted to £225k (2019: £162k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaAST in the year amounted to £162k (2019: £85k).

26 AaA employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2020 (2019: 22).

15 AaAST employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2020 (2019: 13).

#### Local Government Pension Scheme

The Local Government Pension Scheme (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 2020 were £290k (2019: £220k), of which employer's contributions totalled £219k (2019: £161k) and employees' contributions totalled £71k (2019: £59k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2020 employee primary contribution rates were between 5.5% and 12.5% of pensionable salary. The agreed contribution rates for future years are 23.3% for employers, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2020, no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% 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.

At 31 August 2020, 55 employees were members of the scheme (2019: 48).

The most recent comprehensive actuarial valuation report is dated 15 September 2020.



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2020 £'000	At 31 August 2019 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	3.20%	3.65%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.20%	2.15%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	1.65%	1.90%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.20%	2.15%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00%	50.00%

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Adjustment to discount rate</b>	<b>0.10%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>-0.10%</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,382	2,474	2,570
Projected service cost	567	591	616
<b>Adjustment to long term salary increase</b>	<b>0.10%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>-0.10%</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,382	2,474	2,570
Projected service cost	567	591	616
<b>Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation</b>	<b>0.10%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>-0.10%</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,568	2,474	2,384
Projected service cost	616	591	567
<b>Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions</b>	<b>+ 1 Year</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>- 1 Year</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,569	2,474	2,382
Projected service cost	614	591	569

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 2020 £'000	At 31 August 2019 £'000
<b>Retiring today</b>		
Males	21.3	20.6
Females	23.9	24
<b>Retiring in 20 years</b>		
Males	22.8	22.3
Females	25.5	25.8

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation as at 31 August 2020 is as follows:

	31 August 2020 £'000	%	31 August 2019 £'000	%
Equities	541	61%	446	61%
Gilts	41	5%	39	5%
Other bonds	104	9%	65	9%
Property	40	5%	34	5%
Absolute return funds	157	18%	129	18%
Cash	14	2%	13	2%
<b>Total market value of assets</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Present value of scheme liabilities – funded</b>	<b>(2,474)</b>		<b>(1,908)</b>	
<b>Deficit in the scheme</b>	<b>(1,577)</b>		<b>(1,182)</b>	

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

The actual return on scheme assets was £5,000 (2019: £42,000).

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2020 £'000	31 August 2019 £'000
Current service cost	(470)	(353)
Net interest cost	(21)	(15)
<b>Total operating charge</b>	<b>(491)</b>	<b>(368)</b>

Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>1,908</b>	1,129
Current service cost	470	353
Interest cost	37	31
Actuarial loss / (gain)	(4)	338
Benefits paid	(8)	(2)
Employee contributions	71	59
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>2,474</b>	1,908

Changes in the market value of the group's share of scheme assets:	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>726</b>	466
Interest on assets	16	16
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	(11)	26
Other actuarial losses	(115)	-
Employer contributions	219	161
Employee contributions	71	59
Administration expenses	(1)	-
Benefits paid	(8)	(2)
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>897</b>	726

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2020 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	-	10,546	-	6,300	16,846
Investments	1,644	-	-	-	1,644
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	-	66
Net current assets	254	731	909	2,213	4,107
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	(1,577)	(7,342)
	<b>1,898</b>	<b>5,578</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>6,936</b>	<b>15,321</b>

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,546	-	10,546
Investments	1,644	-	-	1,644
Intangible fixed assets	-	66	-	66
Net current assets	254	731	909	1,894
Long-term liabilities	-	(5,765)	-	(5,765)
	<b>1,898</b>	<b>5,578</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>8,385</b>

Restated 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	-	10,839	-	6,423	17,262
Investments	1,750	-	-	-	1,750
Intangible fixed assets	-	19	-	-	19
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	1,325	1,853
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	(1,182)	(6,151)
	<b>2,414</b>	<b>5,219</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>6,566</b>	<b>14,733</b>

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,839	-	10,839
Investments	1,750	-	-	1,750
Intangible fixed assets	-	19	-	19
Net current assets / (liabilities)	664	(670)	534	528
Long-term liabilities	-	(4,969)	-	(4,969)
	<b>2,414</b>	<b>5,219</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>8,167</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

19. Movement in funds	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
For the year ended 31 August 2020:					
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	95	100	(139)	-	56
Education Services projects	148	337	(348)	-	137
Autism Exchange	24	58	(62)	-	20
Family Support	13	162	(66)	-	109
Participation	93	59	(112)	-	40
Succeeding at College	22	65	(47)	-	40
TreeHouse School	96	109	(48)	(62)	95
Online Information Support	-	48	-	-	48
Online Youth Support	-	122	-	-	122
IT equipment	-	238	-	(70)	168
Other	43	200	(169)	-	74
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>1,498</b>	<b>(991)</b>	<b>(132)</b>	<b>909</b>
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,566	4,564	(3,743)	(451)	6,936
<b>Total group restricted funds</b>	<b>7,100</b>	<b>6,062</b>	<b>(4,734)</b>	<b>(583)</b>	<b>7,845</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:</b>					
<b>Designated funds</b>					
Fixed assets	4,295	-	(668)	459	4,086
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	100	-	(27)	100	173
Coronavirus fund	-	-	-	590	590
Cyclical maintenance fund	819	-	-	(95)	724
<b>Total designated funds</b>	<b>5,219</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(695)</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>5,578</b>
General funds	2,414	13,887	(13,932)	(471)	1,898
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds</b>	<b>7,633</b>	<b>13,887</b>	<b>(14,627)</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>7,476</b>
<b>Total group funds</b>	<b>14,733</b>	<b>19,949</b>	<b>(19,361)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15,321</b>

#### Transfers

£459k has been designated to the fixed asset fund to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year, including the completion of the website, a new minibus for TreeHouse School and IT equipment. This includes £132k of fixed assets funded from restricted income.

£95k has been designated from the cyclical maintenance fund to provide for restoration work on the TreeHouse toilets.

£590k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the coronavirus fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including additional costs or losses in income.

£100k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the transformation fund to support our new strategy work.

£451k 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 2020

19a. Movement in funds ( <i>continued</i> )	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
For the year ended 31 August 2019:					
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
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
	<b>567</b>	<b>1,157</b>	<b>(1,158)</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>534</b>
<b>Capital</b>					
Ambitious College	131	27	(1)	(157)	-
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>(1,159)</b>	<b>(189)</b>	<b>534</b>
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,597	3,683	(3,360)	(354)	6,566
<b>Total group restricted funds</b>	<b>7,295</b>	<b>4,867</b>	<b>(4,519)</b>	<b>(543)</b>	<b>7,100</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:</b>					
Designated funds					
Fixed assets	4,631	-	(678)	342	4,295
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	-	-	-	100	100
Cyclical maintenance fund	586	-	-	233	819
<b>Total designated funds</b>	<b>5,222</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(678)</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>5,219</b>
General funds	1,866	13,963	(13,283)	(132)	2,414
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds</b>	<b>7,088</b>	<b>13,963</b>	<b>(13,961)</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>7,633</b>
<b>Total group funds</b>	<b>14,383</b>	<b>18,830</b>	<b>(18,480)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>14,733</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 19b. 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. Both campuses are co-located and developed in partnership with another general further education college.
Education Services projects	This fund includes the Ambitious Approach, a programme to develop a competency framework for a way of working that is values-driven, person-centred, underpinned by Positive Behaviour Support (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 workplace, 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 a range of 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 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.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including peer support from our Youth Network.
IT equipment	This fund will support additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support when they need to be at home.
Other	This represents 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 transformation work that arises from it.
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.
Coronavirus fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

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

	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
Net income	588	350
Depreciation and amortisation charges	882	852
Gains/(losses) on investments	90	(53)
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(53)	(66)
Interest payable	107	113
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	64	(164)
Decrease in creditors	(124)	(585)
Increase in pension deficit	395	519
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>	<b>1,949</b>	<b>966</b>

#### 21. 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	
	2020 £'000	2019 £'000	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
Less than one year	128	132	23	18
One to five years	360	405	30	22
Over five years	352	431	-	-
	<b>840</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>40</b>

#### 22. Capital commitments

At the balance sheet date, the group had contractual capital commitments of £37k (2019: £7k).

#### 23. 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.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

On 1 April 2017, Ambitious about Autism became the sole member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity (company number 08335297).

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. While both entities operate independently, the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism School Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

Balance sheet	2020 £'000	2019 £'000
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Tangible assets	6,300	6,423
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	143	205
Cash at bank and in hand	2,339	1,079
Short-term deposit	5	502
	<b>2,487</b>	<b>1,786</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(274)	(461)
<b>Net current (liabilities) / assets</b>	<b>2,213</b>	<b>1,325</b>
<b>Net assets excluding pension liability</b>	<b>8,513</b>	<b>7,748</b>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	(1,577)	(1,182)
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>6,936</b>	<b>6,566</b>
<b>Funds of the Academy Trust:</b>		
<b>Restricted funds</b>		
Fixed asset fund	6,300	6,342
Restricted income fund	2,213	1,406
Pension reserve	(1,577)	(1,182)
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>6,936</b>	<b>6,566</b>
<b>Unrestricted income funds</b>	-	-
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>6,936</b>	<b>6,566</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (continued)

A summarised extract of AaAST statement of financial accounts (SoFA) for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	Total £'000
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	4	24	83	111
Charitable activities	-	4,453	-	4,453
	<b>4</b>	<b>4,477</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>4,564</b>
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	4	3,854	214	4,072
<b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>(131)</b>	<b>492</b>
Transfer between funds	-	(89)	89	-
Other recognised (losses)	-	(122)	-	(122)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>370</b>
Funds brought forward		224	6,342	6,566
<b>Funds carried forward</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>6,300</b>	<b>6,936</b>

Services were provided by Ambitious about Autism to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £297k from September 2019 to August 2020 (2019: £250k). 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 £53k (2019: £nil).

## Notes to the financial statements

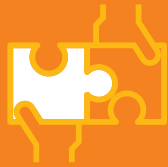
### For the year ended 31 August 2020

#### 25. Consolidated statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2019						
	Note	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
		Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Sub total £'000	Restricted £'000	
<b>Income from:</b>						
<b>Donations and legacies:</b>						
Gifts and donated services	2	909	930	1,839	136	1,975
<b>Short-term deposits</b>						
<b>Charitable activities:</b>						
Educational services	3	12,875	120	12,995	3,547	16,542
External affairs	3	-	101	101	-	101
<b>Training and consultancy</b>		60	33	93	-	93
<b>Investments:</b>		66	-	66	-	66
<b>Total income</b>		<b>13,910</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>15,094</b>	<b>3,683</b>	<b>18,777</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		952	-	952	-	952
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	12
		<b>964</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>964</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>						
Educational services		12,184	809	12,993	3,048	16,041
External affairs		813	350	1,163	-	1,163
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13,961</b>	<b>1,159</b>	<b>15,120</b>	<b>3,048</b>	<b>18,168</b>
<b>Net income before other gains/(losses)</b>		<b>(51)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>(26)</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>609</b>
Net gains on investments		53	-	53	-	53
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	(312)	(312)
<b>Net income for the year</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>350</b>
Transfers between and from funds	19	543	(189)	354	(354)	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>(164)</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>(31)</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>						
Total funds brought forward		7,088	698	7,786	6,597	14,383
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7,633</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>8,167</b>	<b>6,566</b>	<b>14,733</b>

# Get involved

## Partner with us



Nothing we do would be possible without our partners. A lot of people have a connection to someone with autism or are impacted by autism. There are many ways you can support us. You may want to fund one of our projects, join our employability programme or support employees who want to volunteer for us.

## Donate online



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

## Fundraising



Despite the limitations we're all experiencing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, there are still plenty of ways that you can be part of Team Ambitious. You can raise money and make memories along the way, by joining a virtual challenge event or organising your own fundraising activity.

## Leave us a gift in your will



By leaving a legacy, you can support the next generation of autistic children and young people.

## Volunteering



Showing your support for our work doesn't have to be financial: donating your time and talents is equally valuable. Volunteering is an incredible way to show your support, from helping our Youth Network refine their CV writing and interview skills, to tending our school gardens, or joining our network of business ambassadors. There are many opportunities available - we can find the right one for you!

**Join Team Ambitious today and help us to enable children and young people to learn, thrive and achieve.**

Thanks to colleagues across the organisation, including the finance and planning, fundraising, and marketing and communications teams for your contribution to compiling this annual report and accounts.

## 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.

### Contact us

The Pears National Centre for Autism Education  
Woodside Avenue, London N10 3JA

☎ 020 8815 5444

✉ [info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

🌐 [ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

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Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 03375255.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.

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