

Addressing the complexities  
of SEND education and  
inclusion.

Designing a long-term vision  
for all.

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# The 'System'

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- Children with special educational needs are invisible to society.
  - Fragmented educational system.
  - Scarcity of special school places.
  - Waiting times for assessment and diagnosis of a 'special need' can take as long as 3 years and varies from LA to LA
  - Poor access to early intervention.
  - Access to therapeutic support is at best infrequent but more commonly unavailable.
  - Lack of focus on life skills, mental health and emotional wellbeing.
  - Limited educational pathways - poor outcomes.



# The 'System'

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- Tired and antiquated SEN structure that needs reform.
  - Lack of high calibre specialist SEN school places across the UK.
  - No national strategy or joined up thinking on SEN and how best to measure progress.
  - Specialist practice and expertise varies across the UK.
  - Teacher training degrees have limited content on SEN.
  - Limited research to evidence best practice and policy.

The rates of unemployment, young adults on benefits at home with parents, crime, depression, loneliness, and suicide are all significantly higher for those with SEN.

Cumulatively these cost the state billions in benefits, welfare, interventions, and offender institutions.

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- *Studies of young offenders show that up to 45% of UK inmates have a diagnosis of ADHD.*
  - *The National Crime agency data shows a steady rise in the number of vulnerable young people (between 15-17) with SEND who have been recruited and exploited by county lines gangs.*
  - *Children with autism are x28 more likely to think about or attempt suicide*

# Gesher Special School

## A case study



# Background

- Set up by two parents from professional backgrounds with a lived experience of SEND and the 'system'.
- Created to demand in our own local community.
- 3 years of research.
- Large groups of invisible children falling through the cracks in the education system.
- Understanding the SEND 'spectrum' and defining the cohort.





# Opening Gesher Primary

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- Working with Local Authorities to encourage 'buy-in'.
  - Understanding the local community - the 'market' need.
  - Visiting and understanding practice across the UK (and further afield).
  - Collaborating -creating a team of expertise (ART, Prof SBC, CRAE, UCL).
  - Opened in Sept. 2017 with 7 pupils in a rented building.

# Key Features

- Early Intervention.
- Therapeutic Intervention.
- Changing trajectories.
- ‘Whole child’ approach.
- Attachment and relational-led learning experiences.
- Personalised pathways and curriculum.



# The Hustle!

- Setting Gesher up as an independent school.
- Being clear with supporters.
- Educating and inspiring a community to take agency.
- Finding the resources.



# Creating an all-through school

- The need for specialist secondary provision (the current landscape).
- Harnessing expertise (the IU).
- Creating a foundation for influence (workshops & horizon scans).
- Design principals.
- Non-negotiables.
- Outcomes.
- Blueprint - Gesher's COP and wider eco-system.



# Outcomes

**Outcomes for Gesher's young people:**

**Young people graduating from Gesher will be:**

1. **Skilled for the future workplace** - Creative and effective communicators, problem solvers and collaborators.
2. **Qualified for their next stage** - With deep knowledge in academic and vocational disciplines.
3. **Independent learners** - Skilled at managing their own learning, thinking and emotions.
4. **Confident in their sense of self** - Clear about their own direction; knowing their own strengths and needs, and able to advocate for themselves and others.
5. **Builders of meaningful relationships** - With healthy relationships friendships and trusted support networks.
6. **Ethical and responsible citizens** - Understanding and shaped by Jewish faith, heritage and culture. Making positive contributions to our community, society and planet.



# Inclusion - culture and community

- Why community is integral to the world of SEND.
- Community:
  - The school culture
  - Local and wider community (multi-layered)
  - Employers





# Summary

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- Cohort - clear pathways to success.
  - Culture - design principles.
  - Community.
  - Life after school - clear outcomes.
  - Wellbeing, safety and happiness.
  - Research - evidencing practice and policy to help formulate strategy.
  - Collaboration - locally and globally, rewriting the SEND narrative.

# Our bold ambition!

To create a future in which ALL children and young people can thrive.

