



We exist to make a difference

A unique school for dyslexic children



20 Marcham Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1AA



When children learn in a different way,
they should be taught in a different way.



Welcome to The Unicorn School

The Unicorn School is a unique co-educational day school for dyslexic, dyspraxic and dyscalculic children from 6 to 13 years serving the three counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.



We nurture the many talents of each of our children in a warm, supportive family atmosphere. Through our “whole school” approach to dyslexia and one-to-one teaching, we aim to reintegrate our pupils back into mainstream with renewed self esteem, plus strategies for learning and the literacy skills required to enable them to succeed.

The Unicorn has a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to express themselves confidently and take an active role in decision-making within their school. The school is run as a community where all members, parents, pupils, teachers and governors provide support for one another.

Small classes and dyslexia-qualified staff enable our pupils to flourish and quickly overcome their initial fear of failure.

“A changed boy”

Being in a supportive environment can have an immediate and positive impact on a child's confidence and personality.

Hands-on learning for fun and success

Our approach is truly unique and is at the heart of all we do. We use multi-sensory “**hands-on**” teaching methods and work in very small classes. This encourages our children to use all their senses to learn – and to have fun along the way.



When children arrive at the Unicorn School, they quickly realise that the teachers understand that they may need instructions given clearly and in more than one way. Instead of the exhausting, constant struggle to “keep up”, everyone in the class is on an even footing. The experience can be truly liberating and impinges heavily on self-esteem and motivation.

Every effort is made to help each child develop his or her own intellectual potential by creating an atmosphere that is purposeful, disciplined and constructive. In addition, the child’s own one-to-one tutor fulfils a considerable pastoral role providing intensive teaching according to their needs, but also extra encouragement and understanding.

We follow the National Curriculum, although it is differentiated appropriately to meet the needs of our pupils, and all our teachers and any new class teachers are trained and qualified in teaching dyslexic children.



Another famous dyslexic

Walt Disney

*Creator of Mickey Mouse and hundreds
of Disney characters*

The Unicorn has its own **Speech therapist** who works with children for whom articulation, understanding and expressive language present a real challenge.



Seeing what shapes the mouth makes is just one technique.

The magic formula

The Unicorn provides daily intensive one-to-one teaching for every child, with its own personal qualified dyslexia teacher. For most children, the focus will be on improving reading, spelling and study skills.

Every child learns differently; some are highly visual, some are musical and love sound, some can learn rules – most cannot.



The individual teacher adapts their teaching to suit the child's learning style and to enable the child to make meaningful progress in areas of greatest difficulty.

Dyscalculic children may have additional maths lessons and severely dyspraxic pupils will follow a programme of exercises with their teacher, devised in conjunction with an occupational therapist.

Our pastoral support also includes art therapy for pupils whose learning may be compromised by emotional issues.

Children have an individual education plan setting their targets for a term. This is reviewed every term with the child, the teachers and the parents and new targets are set. Detailed written reports are sent home to parents twice yearly. Annual reviews for statemented pupils are conducted according to the Special Needs Code of Practice.

“I wake up in the morning and look forward to coming to school”

Another famous dyslexic

Sir Jackie Stewart

The Flying Scot won three World Drivers, Championships

Verdict delivered to school inspector by Unicorn pupil

Creativity and Success

Many dyslexic children are imaginative and creative. The art work and design and technology work at the school reflect this.



Always working to nurture their talents, the teachers are keen to encourage and expand this creativity across the curriculum and not just in art lessons. Children regularly submit their work to art competitions and invariably bring back certificates and prizes. Many former pupils have gone on to study art at University level.

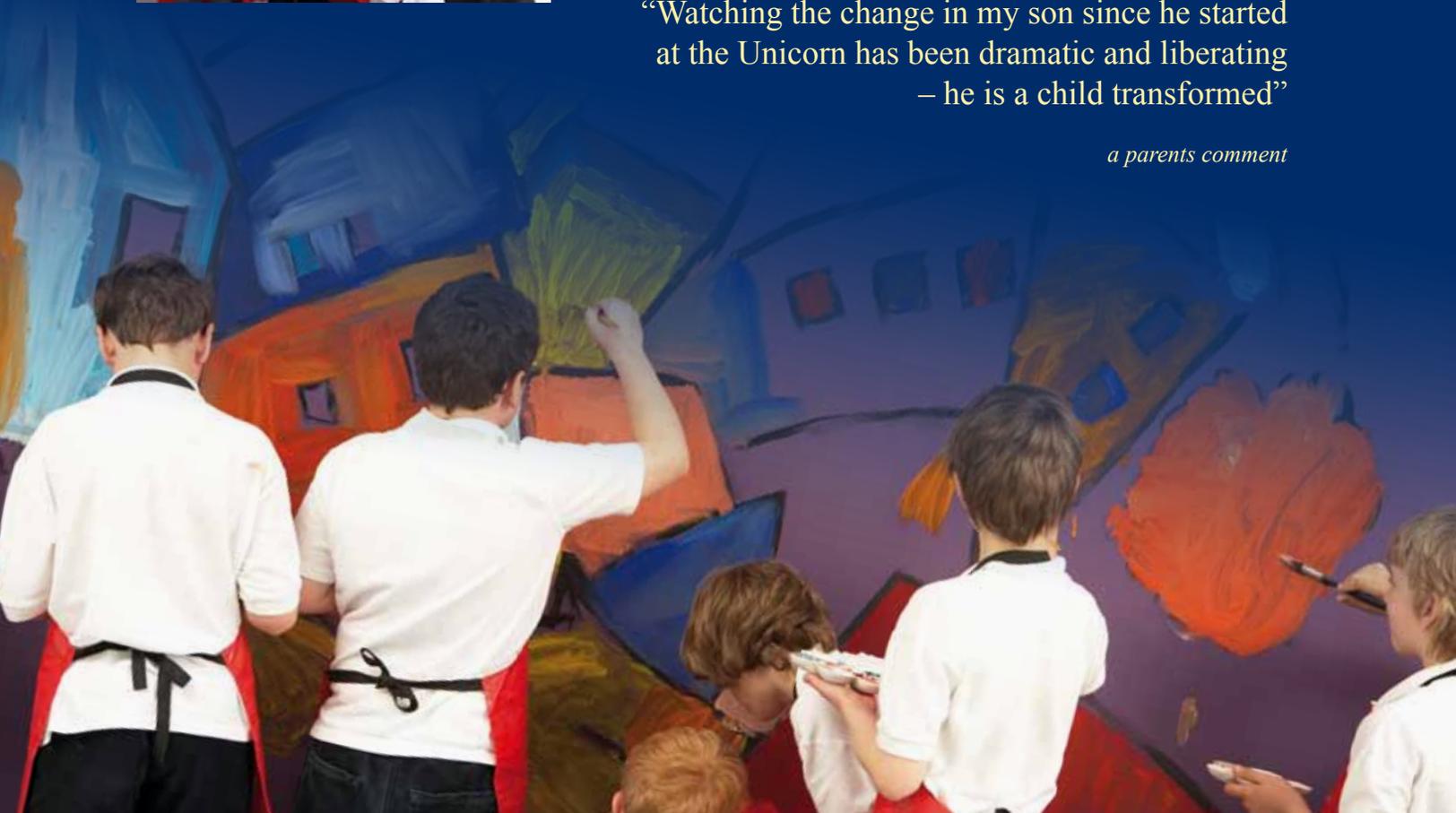
Children love music lessons at our school and are enthusiastic about learning the songs and playing music for the end of year concerts and performances. A dedicated music room provides a venue for individual instrumental lessons as well as class groups.



Our children also learn through drama. Role-play lends itself particularly well to English, History, Personal and Social Education and Assemblies. Every child takes part in our unique end of year production – based around characterisation and improvisation. Past productions have included Peter Pan, Robin Hood, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Oliver and Bugsy Malone.

“Watching the change in my son since he started at the Unicorn has been dramatic and liberating – he is a child transformed”

a parents comment



Another famous dyslexic

Alexander Graham Bell

Scientist and Inventor – widely credited with the invention of the telephone.



IT-The gateway to the future

The ‘state of the art’ IT suite is not only the hub for the teaching of IT skills themselves but is used across the curriculum to:



- encourage pride in the presentation of work
- allow for safe internet research to complement and extend class work
- explore software that encourages expression whilst taking the heat out of spelling.

Teachers work with pupils on literacy and numeracy skills using dyslexia software to consolidate and extend their individual teaching programmes. Interactive whiteboards and appropriate software or highly visual Internet resources are used to support our multi-sensory teaching approach, in all subject areas.

In years 7 and 8, with adequate touch-typing skills, our pupils are encouraged to use laptops in class. This prepares them for opportunities at Secondary School and Higher Education.

“Technology can unlock a child’s ability to learn”

Jackie Vaux, Unicorn School



**4 out of 5
days per
week**

Active learning

Healthy eating, fitness and sport are a very important part of our life at the Unicorn and all our children have sport four out of five days in a week.

Another famous dyslexic

Duncan Goodhew

Olympic swimmer and gold medal winner

“Sport is for everyone,
sport has to
be fun.”

Opportunities in games

Our football team plays in matches against other schools in the Small Schools League and every child who wants to, is given an opportunity to play in the school team. Sailing is a great opportunity to experience the freedom of the open water and to take pride in new-found skills. All pupils are also taught to swim in our weekly swimming lessons.

Games include

- football
- rugby
- hockey
- badminton
- cricket
- volleyball
- basketball
- netball
- athletics
- gymnastics
- tennis
- table tennis
- dance

Clubs & Downtime

After school clubs, extending our school day from 3.45 to 5pm, currently include rifle shooting, cookery, art and sport. Clubs are chosen as a chance to celebrate areas of strength for our children. At lunchtime there are other clubs that children may opt into if they wish.

Playtime is down-time and our play apparatus has been chosen to be slightly challenging for the sporty, active pupils but also easily accessible for less confident and dyspraxic children.

Trips

We arrange trips often in our school minibus, to compliment the curriculum and welcome visiting speakers. A favourite annual residential trip for the whole school is to the adventure centre at HindLeap Warren in the Ashdown Forest.

Here the children achieve personal triumphs through abseiling, rock climbing and challenging high activities under the leadership of qualified instructors accompanied by their own teachers. The children learn to live and work as a team, relying on the cooperation of the whole group to solve set challenges.



Another famous dyslexic

Sir Steve Redgrave

Winner of 5 Olympic gold medals for rowing

The next step

Choosing a school for your child is one of the most important decisions you can take to mould their future development. Come and visit us and talk through your child's needs – we will work with you – and with them to find the very best solution for you all.

Parents Matter

Parents play a vital role in the Unicorn School and particularly as partners in the education of their children. The Unicorn is a very warm and welcoming school and parents frequently drop in and see us. The Friends of the Unicorn are an active group of parents who organise an annual get-together for new parents and provide a valuable support network for other parents.



Jackie Vaux

Jackie Vaux
Head Teacher

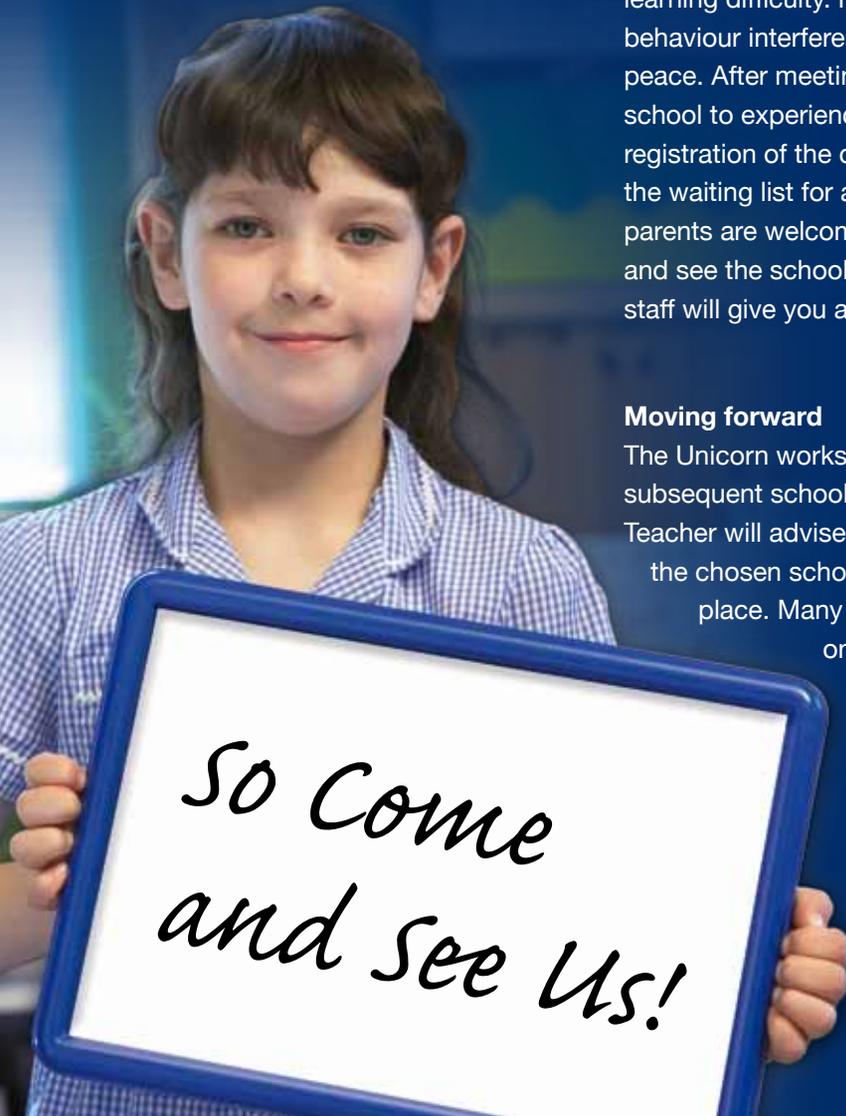
Admissions and procedures

Children are admitted on a first come first served basis as long as they have an educational psychologist's report citing a specific learning difficulty. No child will be admitted to the Unicorn whose behaviour interferes with other children's right to learn and play in peace. After meeting with parents, your child will spend two days in school to experience life at the Unicorn whereupon, if appropriate, registration of the child takes place and their name is added to the waiting list for admission at the next opportunity. Prospective parents are welcomed all year round and are encouraged to come and see the school and the learning environment. The children and staff will give you a warm welcome.

Moving forward

The Unicorn works closely with parents to choose the pupil's subsequent school to encourage a smooth transition. The Head Teacher will advise on the best school for a pupil and will liaise with the chosen school to make sure that any support needed is in place. Many local schools have been fortunate enough to take on our past pupils both in the Independent and in the State sector.

The majority of Unicorn pupils go on to Higher Education and many keep in touch to let us know how they are doing. Recent University places include Medical School, Politics, Maths, Economics, Science, Art, Agriculture, and Speech and Language.





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“I know that none of the things I have managed to do in the last 9 years would have been possible had I not gone to the Unicorn. I arrived not knowing how to spell “cat” and left a confident and developed person (who could spell much longer words than that). Please let me know if there is anything I could do anything to repay the debt of gratitude I have for the Unicorn.”

Kit Kowol

An email from a former pupil now studying Politics at Durham



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