

# Annual Report 2021/2022



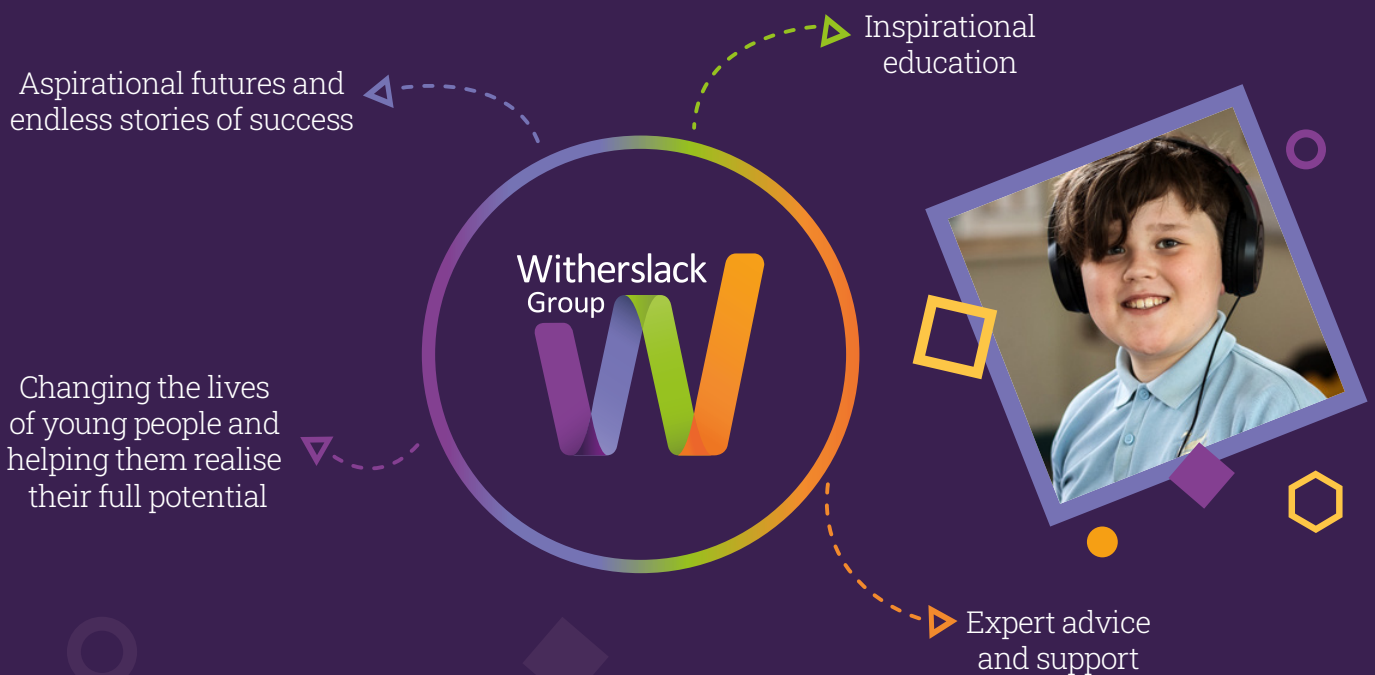
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**Witherslack Group is the leading provider of independent specialist education.**

Since 1996, we have grown organically to establish a network of educational settings and vocational centres. Built on a reputation of the highest-quality provision and achievement of outstanding outcomes, we're proud to be at the forefront of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) sector, providing education, support, advice and guidance to young people, parents, carers and professionals.

The educational, clinical and support services we offer have never been more important to all of our stakeholders. We work in close partnership with over 100 local authorities to ensure that we continue to provide aspirational futures through inspirational education to all the young people who attend our schools.



# A message from our CEO

## Tracey Fletcher-Ray

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**I was delighted to join Witherslack Group in November 2022 as Chief Executive Officer. From day one it has been evident that our young people and their families are at the forefront of everything we collectively strive to achieve.**

2021 was a very challenging year for many companies. Despite the significant challenges of the pandemic, Witherslack Group continues to achieve, grow and develop in its support for our students. There is a shared sense of purpose and the 'Witherslack Way' ensures our values permeate not just into what we do but how we do it.

I have been impressed by the efforts and dedication of front-line teams who have showed continued commitment and dedication to ensure our schools remained open for all of our students throughout the pandemic. I have also been impressed by our robust business performance as we continued to open new settings throughout this period, a prime example of this being Queensmead House School in Windsor, which opened a week after the first national lockdown and now proudly has 100 pupils on roll.

During the 2021/22 financial year, we added a further 126 student places organically and acquired the schools of Eagle House Group in South London, which added a further 221 places. We were also delighted to open our Luxborough Court School in Essex with a capacity of 150 places.

As we look towards the future our vision remains the same - to achieve life-changing outcomes for young people and their families through sector-leading SEN provision. We will do this by continuing to grow our community through safe, stable placements giving more young people the opportunity for long-term success. In order to do this, over the next three years, we will focus in on four key strategic pillars;

We will deliver outstanding outcomes for young people through bespoke education and support packages delivered by engaged teams delivering operational excellence. Our new Futures programme is the embodiment of our determination to realise truly outstanding outcomes for all of our young people, bringing leading employers, entrepreneurs and educationalists together to construct real

pathways into employment and the careers and futures our young people deserve.

We will ensure uncompromising standards across everything that we do. These standards will have a governance framework that supports the delivery of our strategy and long-term sustainable growth.

We will continue to be a financially stable business. We will grow our capacity while maintaining value for money for key stakeholders.

Finally, we are a great place to work where we have engaged people, effective career pathways and a fair and inclusive culture that attracts and retains talent.

As part of my induction I have been meeting colleagues and students across Witherslack Group. It is clear that there is so much to celebrate and an ambition to achieve even more in the future. Our commitment to our children and young people is strong, as are our relationships with families, local authorities and partner organisations, such as the ADHD Foundation and the Johan Cruyff Foundation. We are not only focussed on growing the number of young people we can support across our schools but we also want to enhance all aspects of our offer. From sustainability and environmental impact, to diversity and inclusivity across all stakeholder groups, we want to make sure that we are creating an environment that not only inspires our students but creates truly aspirational experiences and outcomes for all.



# Introduction

## Who we are

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Witherslack Group provides inspirational education to children and young people, resulting in life-changing experiences and countless stories of success.

We are the leading provider of specialist education for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, communication difficulties (autism; Asperger's Syndrome; speech, language and communication needs) and complex learning needs.

Alongside our schools and learning centres, we have an extensive Clinical Team who provide our young people with a personalised and comprehensive package of therapeutic support. We also have our own unique models and approaches as to how we support and inspire our young people, built on the extensive experience, expertise and understanding that we have developed since forming in 1996.

Our long-standing experience of educating and supporting young people enables us to achieve outstanding outcomes and empower each and every young person to realise their own story of success.

**We are Witherslack Group - aspirational futures through inspirational education.**





# Highlights 2021/22

94% of educational settings  
rated Ofsted Good or Outstanding

91% student  
placement stability



100% of students leave  
directly into education,  
employment or training



Employee net  
promoter score (NPS)  
**+41**



86% of students gaining  
GCSE in English and Maths



1.8%  
gender pay gap



1,338 students on roll



30 educational settings



1,913  
FTE staff employed



106 placing  
local authorities



63 local authorities  
placing in excess of 10 years



22 settings opened  
in last 5 years



1,163 jobs created  
in last 5 years



**£2.5 million**  
invested into our staff  
development over past 3 years



Over **40,000** people provided with free advice & support over  
previous 3 years



# Looking to the future

## What's next?

As our history shows, we are relentless in our commitment to support more young people and their families year on year. To achieve this we will continue to strive to develop and grow across all aspects of our operation, ensuring quality of delivery and meaningful outcomes are the keystone for all we do.

Working to be   
**Net Zero**  
by 2032

**£5 million**   
planned investment over next  
5 years for social impact

**100,000**   
people provided with free  
advice and support over  
next 5 years

Over **800**   
new student placements  
over next 3 years

**10**   
new educational settings  
due to open over next 3 years

Over **1,000**   
new jobs created in  
next 5 years

**Our future will be shaped by our commitment to develop beyond being the leading SEN provider, to encompass becoming the leading futures provider for young people.**

# Our Stakeholders

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We are driven by a commitment to improving the experience and outcomes for all of our stakeholders, based on our in-depth understanding of their needs, which is gained through ongoing and meaningful engagement.

Due to the nature of our work, our stakeholders have a unique passion and connection with what we do and the outcomes we achieve for each and every young person. They are invaluable supporters and critical friends as we strive to deliver more and more for our young people and their families.

## Our young people

We don't believe that one-size-fits all. Every child's journey is different but our unique approach ensures that the outcomes remain the same - inspirational achievements and stunning stories of success.

## Our families

We understand that parents and carers want their child to receive the very best education and support, with access to world-class facilities, and staff that constantly go the extra mile. To us there is nothing more rewarding than seeing breakthroughs for young people; everything we do is built around getting the best outcome for our young people and their families.

## Our local authority partners

We work in partnership with local authorities to offer the best provision for young people. We understand the needs and challenges on an individual basis and are able to adapt and offer our services to ensure that local authorities see us as their provider of choice, focussed on delivering outstanding outcomes for all.

## Our wider SEN community

Our wide variety of events and resources offer parents and professionals a unique opportunity to access a range of SEN specific advice, support and training. We are committed to sharing expertise and advice to support both the SEN community and also the wider agenda around neurodiversity and inclusion.

## Our partners

Our relationships with both our partner organisations and, importantly, our suppliers are critical to us maintaining the highest of standards and support for our students. We work with leading charities, such as the ADHD Foundation and the Johan Cruyff Foundation, to ensure we are equipping our teams with the very best understanding and creating inspirational environments. We ensure our relationships and agreements with our full supply chain are focussed on delivering quality outcomes for all.

## Our wider world

We want to further extend our impact to beyond the students and families that directly access our services across our educational settings. As we look to further develop our environmental, social and governance strategies, we aspire to not only impact the lives of our communities, but also to make long-standing contributions and impacts on society as a whole.



# Outstanding Outcomes for Young People



# Working together with Parents and Carers

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## Supporting our young people and their families

To us there is nothing more rewarding than seeing positive breakthroughs for young people. Everything we do is built around getting the best outcome for both them and their family. From the moment they begin their journey with us, we will do everything we can to help and share our expertise to improve outcomes, at both school and at home.

We are also proud to support parents and carers at every stage of their SEN journey. Our teams are always on hand to help and assist, knowing that we are all working together to create real futures for each and every young person.

# Making a true and lasting difference in young people's lives

## My background

- Diagnosis of autism and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Extreme risk-taking behaviours and unable to mix in mainstream education or society

## How we helped

- Dedicated onboarding to understand Jordan and his approach to learning
- Comprehensive assessment process alongside a SaLT, OT, play and art therapist
- Access to the school's alternative education programme and 2:1 learning
- Personalised and creative integrated education techniques, alongside consistent boundaries

## Key outcomes

- ✓ Quickly progressed to independent learning
- ✓ Full engagement in a classroom environment
- ✓ Developed independent care skills
- ✓ Happy, stable; regained a positive home life



Residential pupil at Cedar House School

## My background

- Diagnosis of ASD and PTSD
- History of SEMH needs, high levels of social anxiety and depression
- Missed significant years of schooling

## How we helped

- Developed intervention strategies through educational and therapeutic support
- Techniques shared with family members to ensure consistency
- Bespoke timetable to support Joe's anxieties, whilst also building his social skills
- 1:1 teaching to positively challenge his education and significantly improve attendance

## Key outcomes

- ✓ Achieved a Level 3 BTEC in Applied Science at distinction grade (equiv. to A\* at A-Level)
- ✓ Joe is now undertaking a Biomedical Science degree at Chester University



Day pupil at Pontville School

## My background

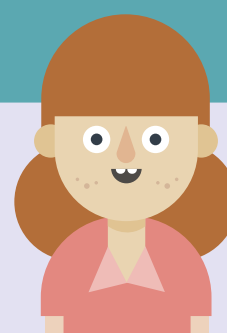
- Non-violent resistance and threatening behaviour both at home and school
- Complete school refusal in 2017
- Elective mute

## How we helped

- ITAC formed to support Jane's personal, educational, social and therapeutic needs
- Personalised approach to reflect Jane's response to strong and trusted relationships
- Range of therapeutic interventions alongside Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach
- Strategies shared with Jane's parents to apply consistently at home

## Key outcomes

- ✓ Developed confidence and formed excellent relationships with staff and pupils
- ✓ Achieved highly in her GCSEs and enrolled on an Animal Care Level 2 college course



Day pupil at Avon Park School

## What do our parents and carers say about us?



"We are so proud of his current progress and achievements. I had always hoped for this day but never expected it to arrive. Thanks to all the staff for their efforts with our son - it has made a huge difference."



"Our daughter is happier than we have ever known. On Thursday night she gave me a big hug and cried because she is so happy there. You must be an amazing team and I can't tell you the difference you're all already making to our family."



"The staff are infinitely patient and supportive and genuinely have the children's best interest at heart."



"Your school crushes barriers to learning and allows them to progress, both with their behaviour and curriculum. The whole process has been stunning."



"My child has received an excellent education during their time at the school. The staff have provided the best support, understanding, empathy and stability that you could ask for."



# Working together with families to create real stories of success

## Dominic's Story

**"The boy that was labelled the 'naughty' child is now a role model who has flourished in an environment that is tailored to his needs. A true hero if ever there was one."**

Labelled as the 'naughty' child, Dominic's previous experience of education was limited to being taught on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom with very little contact with his peers. His high levels of anxiety resulted in him being sent home and excluded as he was unable to articulate his thoughts and feelings. Dominic was diagnosed with ADHD, Global Development Delay and, linked to this, had significant speech, language and communication difficulties.

Hall Cliffe Primary School could see that with therapeutic input from their speech and language therapist and occupational therapist they could help adjust the learning environment to make engagement in lessons much more accessible for Dominic. They provided him with his own wobble cushion for his chair, ear defenders and access to a sensory room so that he could self-regulate his behaviours. As a school, they worked in collaboration with Children's Social Care to support his mum and Dominic's siblings, enabling him to access respite care within the local area. A strong and close relationship with the family and respite staff ensured a seamless handover so that Dominic could be supported in the best possible way.

Dominic now has 100% attendance and has made outstanding progress in all curriculum areas. He is a happy and valued member of the school community and has become a HERO (Helps Everyone, Respects Others). As part of this very special role, Dominic has recently helped to plan activities for other children during Anti-Bullying week. He has also been able to show visitors around the school and helps new pupils to settle in.



**Hall Cliffe**  
Primary School



## Hattie's Story

Hattie found it difficult to engage with learning. She would often feel anxious in lessons and struggled to articulate her thoughts and feelings. Her behaviour became disruptive resulting in her having to leave the classroom, which further isolated the little girl who desperately wanted to fit in. This cycle continued for some time until it was decided that a school that could better meet her needs had to be found; Avon Park School was introduced to her parents who just wanted to see their daughter thrive.

On arrival at Avon Park, Hattie was introduced to her new class where she quickly settled into the nurturing environment. Her teacher introduced a bespoke 1:1 timetable that presented her with short achievable tasks, as well as carefully constructed social time to allow the development of her interpersonal skills. Hattie started to blossom allowing her to build relationships with staff and her peers. Hattie continued to engage with learning, but at times when she became anxious she would

become disruptive and behave as she had done previously. To help manage her frustrations she accessed weekly 1:1 sessions with the school's therapist to help her become more confident and grow into the young girl that staff knew she had the potential to be. Every step of the way, the school worked with Hattie's family to ensure the shared ambition for her was being achieved.

Hattie can now be found at Avon Park School enjoying learning with great interest and intrigue. She is often seen with friends laughing and playing, whilst displaying great behaviour and making everyone proud of the young woman she has become. Confident and articulate, Hattie continues to make real progress and the future certainly looks promising for the girl who has exceeded all expectations.



# Providing support to parents and carers

## Pre- and Post-pandemic support to parents and carers

We remain committed to sharing expert advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). As part of this, we continue to provide a wide variety of free events and conferences to both parents and professionals, giving them a unique opportunity to access sector-leading SEN advice, support and training.

**Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we focussed largely on face-to-face events. Year on year we were reaching more and more parents and carers, providing them with sector-leading expert advice and support on a growing range of subject matter. This grew to such an extent that in 2019 we hosted our first-ever National Parent and Carer Conference at the M&S Exhibition Centre in Liverpool, in partnership with the ADHD Foundation. Hundreds of parents and carers attended and benefitted from listening to a wide range of leading SEN thinkers from around the globe.**

At the start of the pandemic we switched almost overnight to a virtual event offering, knowing our parent and carer community would need even greater support through this time. The move to online events was a real step change for us in the way we were able to offer up our advice, support and training. Virtual events, conferences and podcasts have allowed us to expand our reach and engage with an audience that just would not have been possible in person. For example, in 2018 we had 2,074 registrations from our face-to-face events but fast forward to 2022 and through our webinars alone we have generated 22,200 registrations, with thousands more parents and carers reached via our podcast.

When restrictions lifted we recommenced our face-to-face events in order to allow us to engage with our harder-to-reach audiences, welcoming them back to our settings and enabling them to meet our expert practitioners in person. We will continue to expand our face-to-face event offer over the coming year, and this will soon surpass our pre-pandemic levels.

Over the next twelve months we plan to explore ways to expand our reach, enhance our virtual event offering using other channels, and further improve the experience and value for all of our parent and carer audience, with the ultimate goal of empowering parents and carers to find the right pathway forward for their child and their family.

We are as committed as ever to ensure that we continue to offer parents and carers access to sector-leading SEN advice, support and training, whenever and however they need it.



# Building Futures

## A future our young people deserve

Our reputation has been built on our ability to not only educate and support young people with complex learning needs, but also on the outcomes we enable them to achieve - academically, socially and personally. Whether this be strong education attainment or the destinations that our young people step into beyond their time with us, our track record of ensuring all of our leavers move on to further education, apprenticeships, training or employment, with confidence, capability and ambition, is something that evidences the true value of our collective efforts.

We believe that there is huge opportunity to enhance the futures of our students even further, particularly around the jobs and careers they choose to step into, when the time is right for them.





Whether our young people want to be an astronaut or an artist or anything in between, we are completely committed to helping them realise futures that are out of this world. While we recognise that there can be significant challenge for young people with SEN when entering employment, we realise that there are huge opportunities available to our students, who have so many talents and skills to offer future employers.

From this belief we have developed our Futures programme which is a unique way to completely support every young person into the future they deserve. Developed in collaboration with schools, employers and young people, Futures is about delivering aspiration and opportunity for every child. Importantly, the Futures programme is designed to be accessible and offer support to our alumni long after they have left us, offering a wide range of opportunity and expert assistance as and when our leavers require it.



# The Futures programme is built on six core principles:



- 1** The development of our young people's futures is a Group-wide priority driven by all educational teams, careers support staff and the dedicated Futures personnel.
- 2** We place employability at the heart of the learning experience, both within and outside the curriculum, and provide our young people with the opportunities and support they need to develop into highly sought after and employable candidates.
- 3** We utilise direct employer insight, experience and expertise as part of the development of employability programmes and practices that will achieve significant and measurable outcomes.
- 4** We will offer a portfolio of career opportunities and work placements that enables all young people to be encouraged to broaden their interests, knowledge and experiences in whatever field they choose to pursue.
- 5** Young people will be supported to acquire real understanding of what personal attributes they have to offer employers and the skills they possess. They should in turn be able to demonstrate these to employers in a quantifiable way. Through this they will gain confidence, resilience and ambition, which will present them as 'ready to work' to employers.
- 6** We will provide our young people with actual job opportunities and unrivalled levels of ongoing support to ensure that their first steps beyond education are successful ones that directly lead to employment and the careers they want.

The Futures programme is unique not just in the SEN sector but the education sector as a whole. We want to reshape the role that we have with our students and their futures, by enhancing what we offer to them both during their time within our schools and also beyond into their careers and futures as a whole.

## Our Futures Goals

**100%**   
**of all Year 11/Post 16**  
with a dedicated  
Futures mentor

**An established  
WG alumni**  
with a cohort  
**>200**



**Direct employer  
network**  
**>250**   
national companies

**10**  
**National employer  
partners** achieving   
Futures accreditation

**25%**   
**of Futures ambassadors**  
made up of alumni

**WG Futures  
framework**   
established as  
sector leading

**100%**  
of all vocational centres  
**hosting employer partner  
microsites**



Our own future will be shaped by our commitment to develop beyond being the leading Special Educational Needs provider, to encompass becoming the leading futures provider for young people.

# Future Journeys: Billy's Story



**Billy, a Year 11 student from our Bridgeway School, is today looking towards a future full of promise and potential, and already making successful steps into his chosen career.**

**However, through his own admittance, Billy felt angry and required a lot of support when he first joined Bridgeway School. "When I first came to Bridgeway I was in need of help, but Bridgeway has supported me in whatever way I needed". With this support and encouragement Billy soon began engaging with learning and developed skills to settle into the Bridgeway community. His path to success had been found, but no one quite realised just how big some of the next steps would be.**

Billy had expressed a strong desire to step into a career in construction and wanted to sample as many of the options within the sector as possible. Through our Futures programme, he was introduced to one of our employer partners, Caddick Construction, who were already working with the school to offer students careers support and employment experiences. Our relationship with both Billy and the team at Caddick meant we knew that they would be a really good fit for each other.

Through conversations with Billy, the school and Caddick, it was decided that a bespoke experiential learning programme would be offered. This was to be his introduction to the world of construction and an opportunity to gain first-hand experience of what it's like to work in the sector. Everyone was excited to see how things would progress and how Billy would develop.

Once a week, over a six-week period, Billy donned his hi-vis jacket, hard hat and boots ready for his day with Caddick Construction site manager, Mark. Here, he had the opportunity to get involved in construction activities, making his mark on a 575,000 square foot project. Billy worked side-by-side with skilled professionals and even got to practise his own skills in areas such as bricklaying and site management. This hands-on approach allowed Billy to get up close and personal with different aspects of construction, while also getting insight into how projects are managed. He loved every minute.



Witherslack  
Group  
**W Futures**

# Caddick Construction.



For anyone looking from the outside in, you could easily mistake Billy for being a full-time member of the team. Week by week he was becoming very much at ease with his new surroundings, constantly learning and experiencing, and with Mark by his side, all of his questions were answered and every step encouraged and supported, with plenty of jokes and humour along the way. Billy wasn't just learning the tricks of the trade, he was becoming part of the Caddick Construction team.

Billy's experience introduced him to different roles and opened his eyes to the opportunities that are available. We often hear of companies wanting to give back but this experience, where the staff team gave up their time while managing the demands of a construction site, truly went to another level.

Interacting with the team and being made to feel so warmly welcomed had been nothing short of inspirational for Billy. Everyone, both at school and onsite, had witnessed him grow in confidence and really mature along the way. He wasn't the shy young man he was when he started the experience and the relationships he had made, especially with Mark, were truly amazing to see.



## So what does Billy's future look like now?

Well, he is planning to go to college to build on his experience and further develop his skills across a range of construction disciplines. Caddick have also said that when the time is right for Billy, apprenticeship opportunities are waiting for him so he now has a path to his chosen career well in place.

Billy and Mark, well that story isn't over either; Mark returned to Bridgeway to congratulate Billy and has now accepted a role as his Futures mentor, meaning they will regularly keep in touch through mentoring sessions, focussed on helping Billy take successful steps forward.

The sense of pride and achievement shared by everyone involved in Billy's Futures journey is immense and everyone is eager to watch as Billy continues to build his future, one step at a time.

You can watch Billy's story and other WG Futures journeys by visiting <https://futures.witherslackgroup.co.uk/>

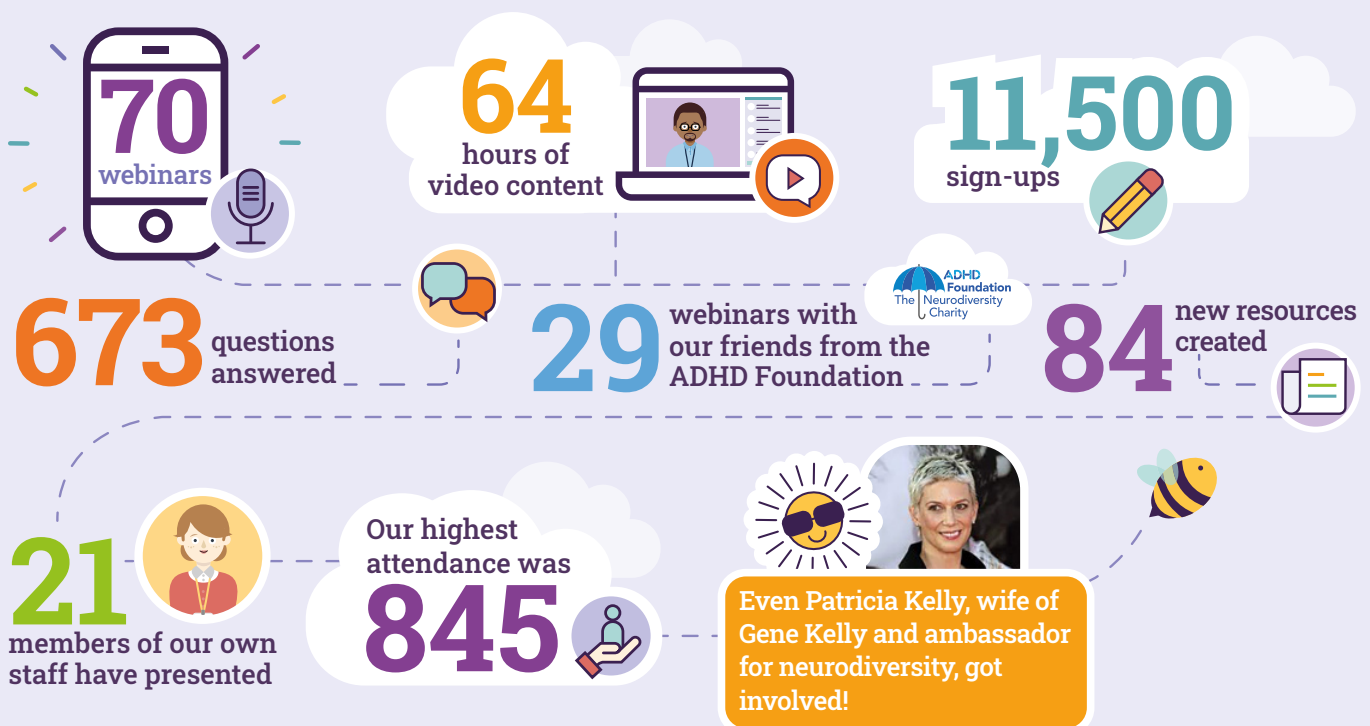
# Supporting our Communities

Throughout our history we have been proud to play our part in supporting the SEN community and championing greater understanding and inclusivity around neurodiversity. We are committed to sharing the best possible advice, support and guidance to aid them in their journey from pre-diagnosis through to education and beyond.

Since 2014, we have endeavoured to be at the forefront of bringing together parents and carers, professionals, and leading experts and thinkers around all aspects of SEN. We have created a range of advice and support that is audience-led and incorporates key topics and subject matter relevant to our community. From understanding conditions such as ADHD and autism, to the Education, Health and Care Plan process, to practical advice and support for parents and carers, we support tens of thousands of people.

Our mission is to bring together both our own and external partners' experience and expertise to strengthen and equip parents, carers and SEN professionals, with greater understanding, awareness and capability to enable children and young people to succeed. We do this because we believe we should play our part in sharing expert-led advice and support, and that every child and family deserves the right to succeed, no matter their diagnosis or starting point in life.

**This year we continued to host free webinars to support even more parents, carers and professionals with expert advice on a range of topics related to SEN.**



**Have you signed up for our Summer Camp '21 yet?**  
It's the summer we've been waiting for and we want to continue supporting you during the holidays so that you can enjoy the best time possible with your family!

**Summer Camp '21**

Sign up for your weekly support resources here:  
[www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/summer-camp21](http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/summer-camp21)

ADHD Foundation The Neurodiversity Charity | Witherslack Group

Expert advice for parents, carers, professionals and young people.

Events establish contact and drive engagement at all stages of a young person's journey.

Witherslack Group | **ADHD FOUNDATION** The Neurodiversity Charity

**National Parents & Carers Conference: Special Educational Needs and Mental Health**

**Saturday 7th November 2020, ACC Exhibition Centre, Liverpool**

Witherslack Group and the ADHD Foundation are partnering on the second national multidisciplinary conference solely dedicated to parents and carers. This unmissable conference will cover a broad range of SEN specific practical advice and expert opinion to support children and young people, including Autism, ADHD, Mental Health, Speech & Language, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia.

The presentations will be delivered by a field of expert speakers from across the world, including:

Rory Bremner	Dr Hilary Jones	Dr Tony Lloyd
Professor Amanda Kirby	Professor Sean Duggan	Dr Amelia Roberts

Plus a host of educational and clinical expert practitioners and performances by young people.

**Learning more about ADHD: Practical Support**  
**Saturday 25th April 2020**  
**Hall Cliffe School in Wakefield**

A FREE workshop aimed at developing your understanding of ADHD and providing everyday advice to further support your child.

**The day will cover the following topics:**

- Overview of ADHD, autism and associated conditions
- Executive functioning and emotional regulation
- The impact on ADHD on families, environment, education and learning
- Practical strategies to help manage the condition

Hall Cliffe School

Optimising engagement through a mix of face-to-face and virtual activities.

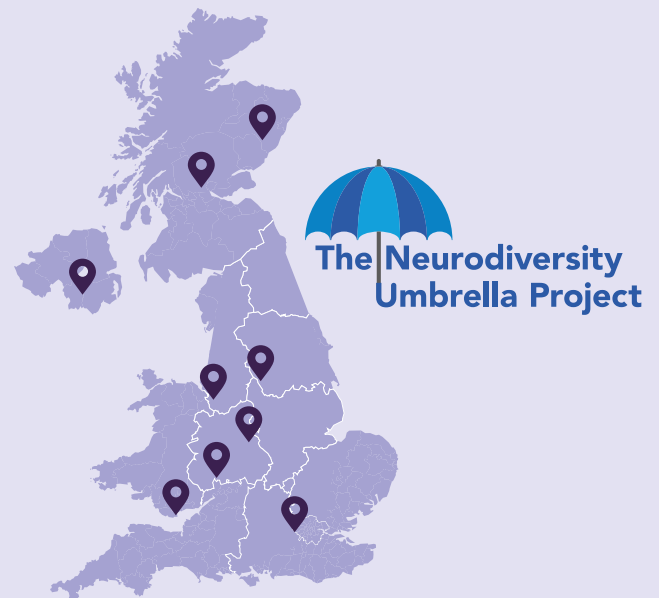
Year on year our impact and reach across the SEN community grows and the range of webinars, virtual and face-to-face events and conferences, podcasts, and downloadable resources increases in both volume and breadth of content. We are resolute in maintaining quality in everything we do: in our delivery and engagement with our audiences, in our relationships with our partner organisations and expert speakers, in our understanding of the changing needs and relevant focus topics and in how we play our part in changing attitudes, understanding and opportunity for the SEN community.

We strongly believe that as we support the wider SEN community we also enable our young people across our schools to step forward into futures that provide them with greater options and opportunities. The work we do not only helps our young people today, but positively impacts society in the future.



We are proud to be a founding partner of the Neurodiversity Umbrella Project, a celebration of the 1 in 5 human beings who 'Think Differently' by virtue of their dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and autism. Umbrellas as an image were chosen by young people as a bright, colourful and optimistic symbol of neurodiversity.

The campaign has seen public umbrella installations in city centres across the UK, bringing together communities, businesses and charities in positive celebration of neurodiverse people and their strengths and talents. The city centre installations of brightly coloured canopies of umbrellas have been a focal point for community groups, arts performances, and events, gaining significant press and media coverage. In 2022, over 500 schools, public buildings and business premises also had mini-umbrella installations of umbrellas suspended from their ceilings, as part of the wider social impact of the Neurodiversity Umbrella Project.





We are also proud to be an official partner of the Johan Cruyff Foundation, which was set up by one of the world's greatest sporting icons. The aim of the organisation is to support and develop sports activities for children and young people all over the world.

Our state-of-the-art Cruyff Courts, are all-weather pitches which support small group sports, including football, basketball, volleyball and netball. The aim of the spaces is to offer pupils a place to grow, make friends and improve their mental health.

We were proud to welcome Dutch international captain and Johan Cruyff Foundation's Ambassador, Virgil van Dijk, to our Pontville School to officially launch their court. Also, Dutch international Jackie Groenen visited our Cumberland School to open their court, which fittingly carries her name.



CREATING SPACE



# Uncompromising Standards



# Our Business

## Demonstrably the highest-quality national provider

Witherslack Group's delivery model is centred around each of our schools serving as centres of educational and therapeutic excellence.

Our schools provide a unique and inspirational environment within which young people can thrive and develop.

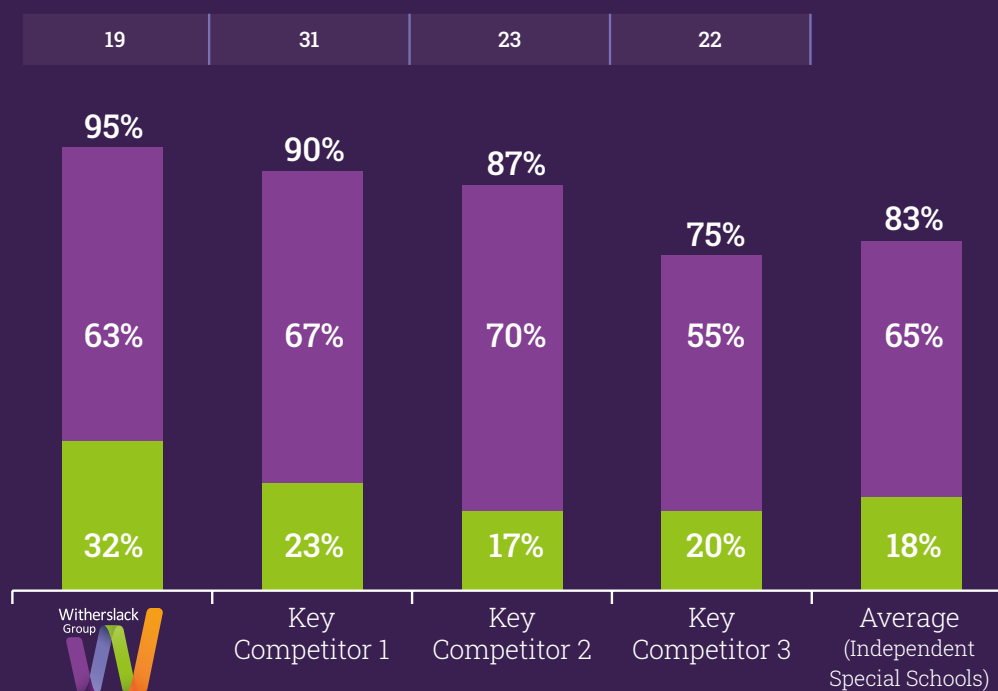
This range of specialist settings, both day and residential, offer unrivalled opportunities, experiences and support for every child. Our highly dedicated, skilled and experienced teams work with parents, carers and local authorities to deliver outstanding outcomes and inspire the future that every child and family deserves.

**Clear leader in specialist education, evidenced by highest proportion of Outstanding ratings.**

No. of schools as of April 2021

Ofsted ratings, April 2021

- Good
- Outstanding



**All of our schools offer state-of-the-art learning resources and well-equipped environments. Students are supported by qualified and experienced staff who are able to offer an extensive range of academic, practical, vocational, sport and leisure activities to aid both a young person's educational achievement and the continued development of their social and communication skills.**

Our residential placements provide young people, whose special educational needs have impacted on both their school and home life, with an environment and support that enables them to find stability and make sustained improvement. For some young people a residential placement can be the best option in helping them to access the education, support and stability they need to achieve and develop. In such cases, the young person will live in one of the residential houses at school and return to their home setting on a weekly, fortnightly or termly basis, dependent on availability and suitability.

Our schools have a track record of not only academic, social and emotional development for young people, but also offer a comprehensive and long-standing support package for parents, carers and wider family members.

2021 saw us opening a new primary provision at our Ashbrooke School in Sunderland, and our Bolton-based Cumberland School launching its partner vocational centre. We also opened Millcourt School, a brand new setting located in Shelf, Yorkshire. Early in 2022, we completed our first acquisition of a small independent provider, Eagle House Group, which enabled us to establish a footprint in the London area, with four settings located in Sutton, Mitcham and Surrey. This followed our opening of Queensmead House School in Windsor in 2020, providing a strong presence in the South East region.

## Clearly articulated value for commissioners and other stakeholders

### Characteristics that set us apart from the competition

	<p><b>Stability of placements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Undisputed reputation as the go-to provider for the most challenging placements.</li> <li>✓ SBI team work with young people whose placement is in danger of breaking down.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Relentless focus on outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A track record of strong educational attainment and skills development, with 100% of all leavers moving on to further education, training or employment.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Real-time transparent reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Live information through 'Authority Link' platform allowing direct access to data on attendance, assessment and behaviour.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Positive and collaborative relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Dedicated team of Local Authority Partnership Managers whose role is to build and maintain relationships with commissioners and placement officers.</li> </ul>

Our commitment to delivering sector-leading therapeutic support to all of our young people is based on the belief that to realise the full potential of each young person, we must support all of their educational, emotional and behavioural needs in a personalised and holistic way.



Across Witherslack Group settings we implement our Internal Team Around the Child (ITAC) approach. This approach enables all young people to have access to cohesive and integrated services with all the relevant practitioners concerned with an individual young person meeting regularly. This ensures that the services delivered are integrated, prioritised, and coherent, and achieve their intended outcomes.

## The ITAC process has five core elements:

1. The effective sharing of information about the child, young person or family to underpin on-going work. 
2. Consistency and coordination in the services delivered. 
3. A multi-disciplinary approach to supporting a child, young person and family. 
4. The development and delivery of a package of solution-focussed support, with each ITAC member being responsible and accountable for their actions and the services they provide. 
5. The review of progress and outcomes, identifying further action and support that may be needed. 

The ITAC process is one example of our unique operating model and culture, known as the 'Witherslack Way'. These shared standards and ways of working are embedded across our whole Group and from this we have built the central framework that provides robust reporting systems, bespoke digital platforms, comprehensive policies and measurable KPIs across all aspects of our offer.

# Our Therapeutic Parenting Approach



Our approach to Therapeutic Parenting is based on extensive evidence and our understanding of child development, complex trauma theory, neuroscience and conditions, such as autism, to develop core practice models of support for our young people.

We use these models to develop our practice as therapeutic practitioners, in school as therapeutically informed educators and in our residential education settings as therapeutic parenting practitioners. Additionally, we have developed our own training programme 'Foundations to Therapeutic Practice' that has integrated these within our induction and CPD processes.

Having established a safe and secure therapeutic foundation for our young people, our Clinical Team undertake further assessment to provide evidence-based personal formulations, which are used to create recommendations for therapeutic engagement and relationship building, greater enabling our young people to access living and learning opportunities.

Our Child Focus Meetings bring together all our collective knowledge and experiences of living and learning with each individual child, so we can together ensure consistent engagement and practice. The meetings aim to help the team to understand the young person's presenting needs in the context of their history and provide ideas for both direct (e.g. therapeutic interventions) and indirect (e.g. working through families, carers, teachers) support. Teams often feedback that the shared understanding helps them to hold more empathy and compassion for the child they support, as well as helping them to 'think on their feet' by responding to the needs in line with the individualised formulations.



Witherslack Group has pioneered the model of Integrated Learning Centres (ILC): small-scale, specialist day schools and accommodation co-positioned on a single site for young people with highly complex needs.

Our ILCs allow us to provide the same level of sector-leading education and therapeutic support for smaller groups of young people. This approach considers the additional support required by young people with significant needs to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for each young person.

The unique characteristic of an integrated provision is the delivery of 'wrap around' residential education and therapy to young people, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We have made recent additions to our ILC offering through the opening of the Sandwell Learning Centre in Oxfordshire and The Eaves Learning Centre in Wiltshire and also plan to open in Shropshire and County Durham.



# Continuous improvement partner programme



Since 2016, we have worked collaboratively with the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), commissioning a number of reviews to determine the quality of support for our children and young people and their family or carers. Witherslack Group is proud to have been recognised as the first member of BILD's new improvement partner programme, recognising our commitment to working together to continually improve practice in relation to Positive Behaviour Support and improving the quality of life of the young people we support.

At the same time, we have progressed learning and development opportunities for our people by establishing a network of in-house Positive Behaviour Support coaches.





# The achievement of optimal outcomes is at the core of our culture

## 'Witherslack Way'

The effective sharing of information about the child, young person or family to underpin ongoing work

Enables scalable organic growth while maintaining market-leading quality standards and outcomes

Ensures that the young person is engaged and feels safe, and is therefore receptive to learning and has the stability to optimise educational attainment and emotional development



### Dedicated focus on outcomes

ITAC framework and in-school therapy solutions provide a unique approach to specialist education, centred on identifying each pupil's particular needs

Team of over 130 therapists: help to ensure an optimal environment and experience based on individual needs

Education provision offering services across entire pupil pathway, from primary to post-16, with supporting residential accommodation

Prepares young people with skills for life through bespoke career development pathways and specialised vocational centres

### Rigorous monitoring & tracking

#### First 2 months

- ✓ Clinical, behavioural and academic baseline assessments
- ✓ Clear benchmarking of pupil's position with right plans in place to reduce risk of placement breakdown

#### Life of placement

- ✓ Focus on emotional and academic progress
- ✓ In-house therapists deliver therapy per EHCP
- ✓ Termly ITAC meetings and bi-annual Boxall Profiling to inform internal interventions

#### When our young people leave us

- ✓ Focus on equipping young people with skills to live independently, ready to contribute to society



# Key Sector Trends

Witherslack Group is proud to be seen as the gold standard in specialist education for 'high acuity' young people with ASD, SEMH and SLCN. Our innovative, outcomes-led model has gained a trusted reputation among our key stakeholders. We are seen by many local authorities as the undisputed go-to provider for young people in need of the most specialist and personalised educational, clinical and emotional support.

Our education model includes focussed therapeutic support and personalised teaching to ensure positive outcomes where other placements have failed. This in turn leads to stability in both the relationships we develop with each and every child and also in the longevity of their time with us.

We are proud that placement stability has been in excess of 90% over the last four years, even as the complexity of needs of young people joining our schools has increased.

Our commitment to achieving the highest standards in all aspects of our service remains central to all that we do. Our educational settings are demonstrably the highest-quality provision within the sector, evidencing their lead position through the achievement of the highest proportion of Ofsted Outstanding judgements. Additionally, our associated children's homes inspections show 96% of judgements rated as Good or Outstanding versus the national average of 80%.

**The leading specialist education group** with **30** education hubs and **1,460** pupil places

**Sector-leading quality ratings and positive outcomes** for young people with **91%** of schools rated **Good or Outstanding**

**Innovative approach to education** underpinned by operational excellence

**Clearly articulated value** for commissioners and other stakeholders that sets us apart from competitors

Demand for our services continues to grow as understanding and identification around neurodiverse conditions continues to advance. Aligned to this are improvements around early diagnostic methods, availability of access and better identification of 'high acuity' for special educational needs provision, particularly SEMH and ASD.

Since the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014, understanding and advocacy around all aspects of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has continued to increase also. Greater recognition of SEN criteria and stronger parental influence in the provisioning process has resulted in a year-on-year increase in the levels of young people with EHCPs, which is a critical criteria when considering a placement at an independent specialist setting.

Over the past 5 years, there has been a noticeable increase in the awareness among local authority commissioners and parents and carers of SEN young people around the ability of specialist provision, such as our own, to better support the growing complexity of pupil needs, as compared with a traditional mainstream environment. This can be directly evidenced through the outcomes realised by specialist provision in not only re-engaging young people with their educational, social and personal development, but also in the long-term outcomes that each student goes on to achieve.

There has also been a noticeable shift around attitudes to the role of the independent sector and widespread greater recognition of the value of higher-quality SEN provision. As the identified market leader in independent specialist provision, we have been uniquely positioned to support local authorities who have challenges around budgetary pressures and the general lack of funding and resource for new state special school provision.

We have been able to work closely with local authorities to add specialist capacity in areas of high demand, via our proven ability to invest in and develop high-quality new settings.

Demand for our services and support is higher than ever, compounded by the impact of the pandemic on the education of so many vulnerable young people, and we are committed to continuing to play our part in working with our key stakeholders to ensure the highest-quality provision is available to support the needs of young people in all regions of the country.



# Regulatory Update

In 2021/22 our sector was largely in recovery from the pandemic and Ofsted inspections had begun to take place again in a more usual, pre-COVID, routine. It is widely accepted that the impact of the pandemic saw children across the country face significant challenges when adapting back-to-school routines and increased social contact, as well as the impact this made on their overall educational attainment and personal wellbeing.

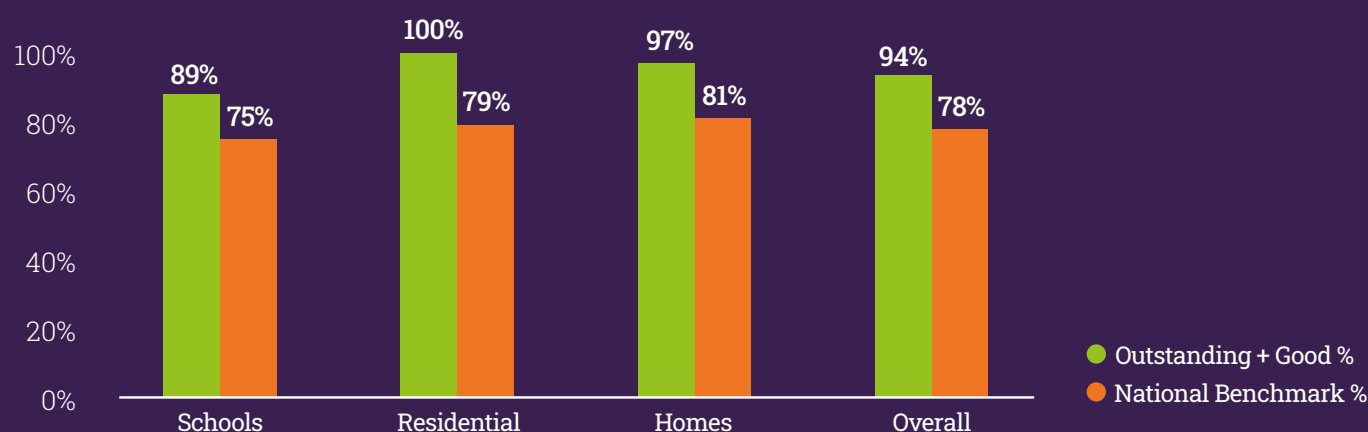
Our student cohorts were certainly not immune to this; however, the situation observed across our settings evidenced how effectively the challenges faced from COVID-19 had been managed in a combined Group-wide effort to enable our young people to thrive.

Our people, at all levels, continued to deliver uncompromising quality of support throughout, in a time when the sector was experiencing a well-documented staffing crisis, which provided consistency, stability and high-quality education for all of our children and young people.

As we began to enter the exit stage of the pandemic we remained open throughout, providing consistent support to our young people and their families. Our schools maintained the high standards expected across Witherslack Group, being judged to be 14% above national benchmarks within the independent special school sector.

Across our residential schools, located in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Lancashire, we exceeded the national benchmark when measured against other residential special schools by 21%, while our associated children's homes also exceeded national benchmarks by 16% during this period.

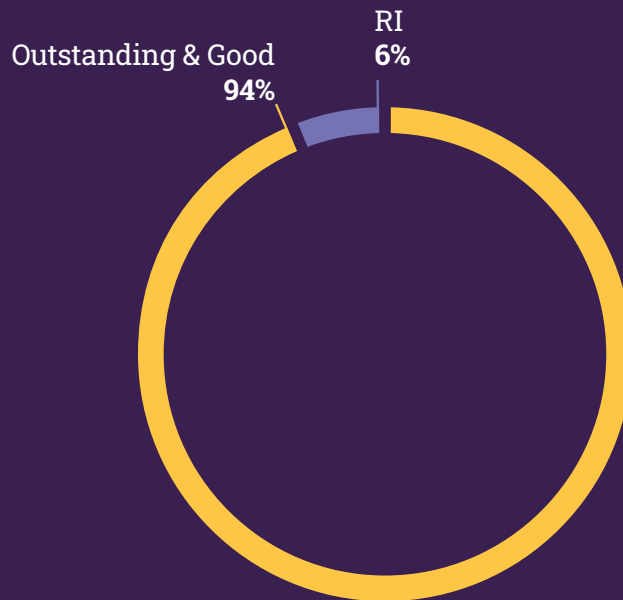
Witherslack Group Inspection Judgements versus National Benchmarks 2021/22\*



\*Data extracted December 2022

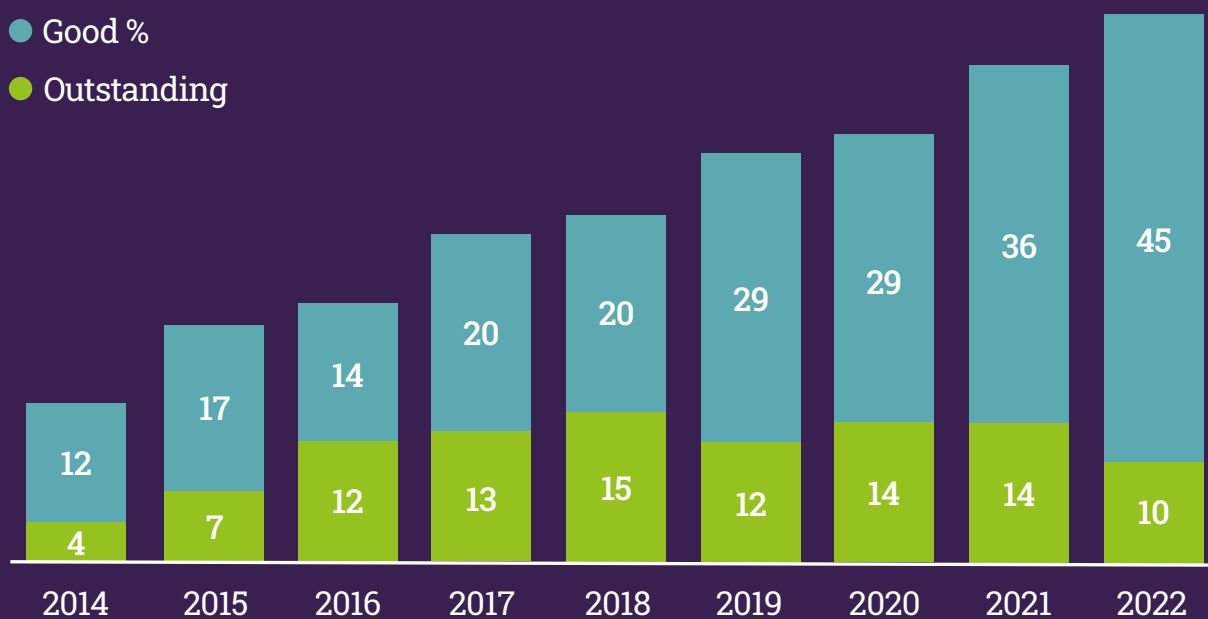
Our collective efforts ensured that we maintained our standards and further embedded our position as the leading provider of our type in the sector. This is evidenced by the fact that 94% of our sites through this period were judged as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

### All Witherslack Group Judgements 2021/22\*



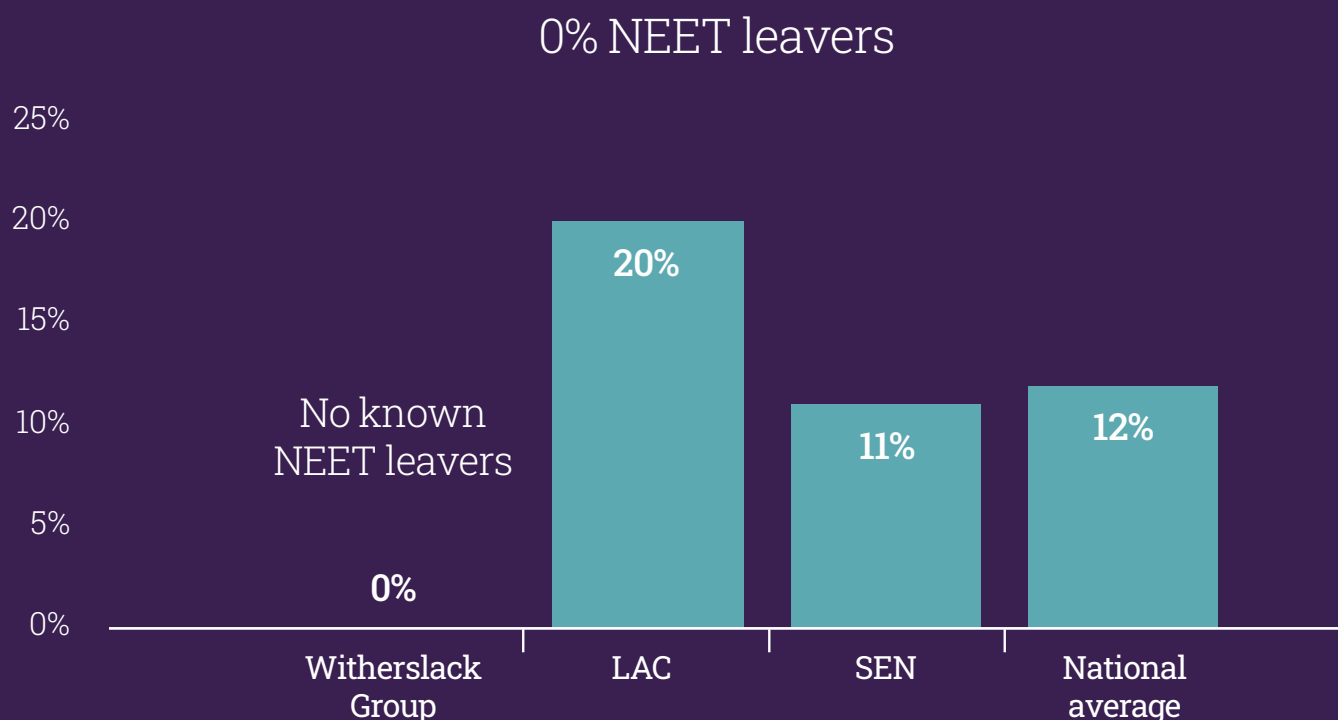
\*Data extracted December 2022

### Industry-leading Ofsted ratings



# Industry-leading placement stability and outcomes

91% placement stability



## NEET data references:

WG - All WG schools and associated homes

LAC - [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England 2022](#), GOV.UK

SEN - ['Key stage 4 national level destinations' from 'Key stage 4 destination measures 2020/21'](#), GOV.UK

National Average - [NEET age 16 to 24](#), GOV.UK

The quality of provision Witherslack provides is exceptional, they have gone a long way in therapeutics and clinical offer. It enables them to provide for highly challenging children and we will always look to Witherslack to help as they have that level of experience...

**Local Authority Commissioner**



# A Better Planet

## Our commitment

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Sustainability shapes our plans and activities at all levels at Witherslack Group. We are determined to be the example to our young people and we are committed to making our environments and practices as sustainable as possible.

We recognise that we have a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements and therefore we must have strong principles with respect to our impact on the environment and our intentions on how we will control and manage that impact. These principles form the foundation of our commitment to effective environmental management and our overall contribution to a better planet.

An example of one of our many commitments is to achieve 'ECO School' status for all our schools. Our Risk Management Team is

actively supporting all our educational settings to become ECO Schools, demonstrating the collective commitment to how much we care about environmental issues and our shared desire to actively protect our planet. Achieving ECO School status and embedding principles around environmental issues such as climate change, plastic/litter pollution, and sustainability, at the centre of school life, will not only enable us to make positive impacts to our environments but also set the example to our students.



As an organisation we are committed to incentivise and accelerate new behaviours within the Group that will help to deliver lasting, sustainable change. For example, we are committed to play our part in reducing plastic waste, food waste and the carbon emissions created by our operations. In addition to these commitments our longer-term strategies include:

Only purchasing items that originate from a **sustainable source**.



The implementation of more **robust recycling programmes** in all our settings.



**Conserving energy** in the workplace by implementing a programme of replacing 'on/off' light switches with sensor activated lights.



An ongoing programme of replacing old strip lighting with **energy efficient** LED versions.



**Procuring computers and I.T. equipment** that fully shutdown at a predetermined time.

Continuing to promote a **paperless culture**.



Encouraging **re-using** rather than replacing.



**Increasing the number of office plants** throughout the Group, providing greener surroundings and **increasing CO<sub>2</sub> reduction**.



Installing 'push taps' to **reduce water consumption**.



Encouraging the use of local providers whenever possible thus reducing a '**delivery**' **carbon footprint**.



**Introducing electric/hybrid vehicles** and ceasing purchasing diesel engine vehicles.

Even the **uniforms** our pupils wear are now being sourced **made from recycled plastic!**



We are committed to leading our sector, caring for the communities we serve and taking action to drive sustainability. We want to play our part in reducing waste and the carbon emissions created by our operations. We also want to incentivise and accelerate new behaviours that will help to deliver lasting, sustainable change across our sector. As an educational provider we are uniquely placed to educate our young people, lead by example in how we embed more sustainable practices, and to drive change among our partners and suppliers.

We feel a responsibility to not only educate our students, but to provide education and inspiration to all of our stakeholders.



## Working towards B Corp

A key focus for us moving forward will be to evidence our complete social and environmental impact. We have committed to achieve B-Corp certification and in doing so become a leader in the global movement for an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economy.

Through a strong focus on environmental impact, social contribution and responsible governance we will further enhance trust with our communities and suppliers, attract and retain employees, and draw mission-aligned partners.

Our journey so far has seen us review our current position, both internally and externally, and map out our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy and reporting capabilities.

# A Great Place to Work



# Our Culture

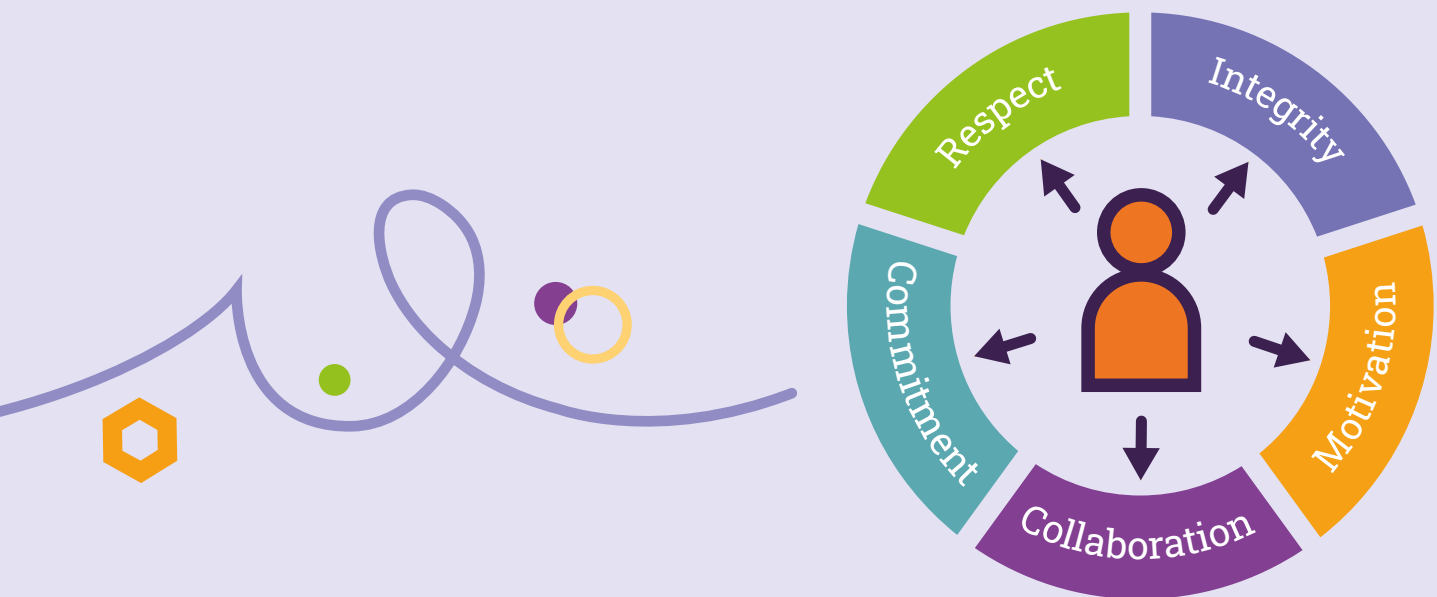
As the foremost specialist education provider in the country we understand our responsibility in leading by example.

For our young people and their families we are committed to continuously going above and beyond to ensure we are not only sector leading but world class. To do this we continually reflect on, refine and refresh our approaches and environments to ensure they never stop improving and being the best they can possibly be.

It is the same for recruiting and retaining outstanding professionals. We are looking to constantly improve how we support and reward every member of our team. Whether it be career development, new benefits, acknowledging achievements, or simply celebrating the small things that combine to make life-changing impacts – we won't stop on our journey to be the employer of choice in our sector.

Our schools put us at the heart of local communities. Our employees are the public face of Witherslack Group. We are proud that we have jointly created a culture where everybody can fulfil their potential and be their best, whether in one of our schools, residential education settings or working at Head Office supporting our front-line teams.

We have a fair and inclusive culture, underpinned by our Witherslack Group Behaviours. Our behaviours are embedded into our performance management process and our recently introduced online recognition platform. The platform, part of our intranet, enables our people to recognise the great work of colleagues and acknowledge support, good practice and positive impact and outcomes.



**2,000+** employees across our schools, integrated education provisions and Head Office. **This is a 10.8% increase from last year.**



**60%** of our colleagues are female and **40%** are male.



In leadership roles we have **50.6%** female and **49.4%** men.



**10.67%** median gender pay gap



Our training team provided over **8,000** training days and over **7500**, e-learning modules.



**Our rating on job referral networks is consistently higher** than other providers.



Our pay and reward packages are **market leading.**



We have high expectations. We think our young people should have no limit on what they can achieve with us. We believe our people should work in settings that they are proud of, with all of the resources they need to do amazing work. In short, we don't compromise in investing in our teams, our settings and ultimately our young people.

Experience and expertise allow us to achieve amazing outcomes. We understand that to keep improving and doing more we must be constantly listening and learning. We hold regular employee engagement surveys and welcome feedback and ideas from everyone. Collectively, we have a learning culture where everyone is encouraged to realise their full potential and play their part.

# Our People

## Employee engagement

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We aim to build a supportive, diverse and highly motivated staff community that will help us to attract and retain talent. In a world of work that is providing education and support for vulnerable children, employee engagement is crucial. Engagement with our people is strong, evidenced through both our annual and pulse surveys. We are particularly proud that so many of our colleagues confirm that they would recommend a friend or relative to work at Witherslack Group. This is reinforced by the high number of staff using our 'recommend a friend' scheme.

Strong employee engagement is a strategic priority for us. We are a purpose-led organisation and we work hard to build trusting, productive working relationships. We run engagement surveys twice a year and the findings are built into our forward People Plans. Our surveys are anonymous and managed by an external organisation, The Happiness Index.





# 2021 / 22 Engagement Survey Highlights

## Key facts:

 Response rate: **90%**

 Average question score: **8.2**

 Highest scoring question being 'Improving outcomes for young people is a top priority at my place of work?', **rating 8.9**

 Our lowest scoring question was 'How much do the systems and processes effectively support you in your role?', **rating 7.6**

## Employee net promoter score

Well above the UK Education sector benchmark of +8



## Response rate

Above the average response rate recorded by the Happiness Index of 74%



“It’s really pleasing to see that staff across our Group truly recognise that improving outcomes for our young people is at the core of everything we do.”



**Tracey Fletcher-Ray, Chief Executive**

**This year many of our colleagues were operating in extremely difficult conditions because of the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 presented significant challenges; however, the commitment of our teams ensured that we kept all of our schools and learning centres open.**

Our priority during this period was looking after our people and in turn ensuring that they were able to provide the support and reassurance that our students and their families so needed. We tried to make it as easy as possible for everyone to be in work and to stay safe.

We took a range of measures including paying thank you bonuses to our frontline staff, changing our policies and payments to support our most vulnerable team members, and also implementing a new 'Me@WG' platform offering health and wellbeing advice.

**MOVE**   
**MUNCH**  
**MONEY**  
**MIND** 



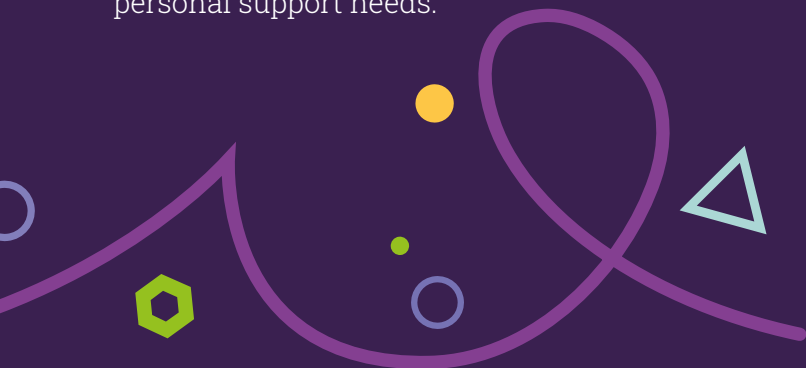
We recognise that our employees know our business better than anybody else. They have a diverse range of views and experiences making them well placed to identify opportunities for improvement.

**We collect ideas on how to improve via our engagement surveys and our dedicated online intranet site. From this, we are delighted that the following initiatives and ideas have all been implemented following recommendations from colleagues:**

- Implementation of an employee discount and savings platform via Reward Gateway.
- Introduction of Halfords car maintenance scheme.
- Introduction of an online car lease & purchase scheme, via salary sacrifice.
- NHS and Care Worker blue light scheme available online.
- Online flexible benefits allowing people to customise their reward package.
- Total reward statements introduced allowing people to see in one place the total value of their reward package.



To deliver outstanding outcomes for our children and young people we need highly skilled, highly trained professionals. To enable this we deliver innovative training to support our people to develop their understanding, build confidence and enrich their practice. This year we launched Therapeutic Parenting training delivered by our Clinical Team. The training supports front-line teams to better understand the backgrounds of our children and how that affects how they see the world and their personal support needs.







# Welcome to Care Academy

This year we also launched our training Care Academy to ensure that we provide a comprehensive induction and a warm Witherslack Group welcome for our new starters across our residential education settings. The Care Academy is run by our learning and development partners, all of whom have worked at Ofsted Outstanding provisions. The team deliver a high standard of training to help our starters to feel inspired, supported and safe in their new roles.



Additionally, developing a diverse leadership pipeline is critically important to us. This year we introduced two new development programmes that were specifically designed to support existing employees to fast track into leadership positions. The programmes, Elevate and Aspire, delivered by directors and offering recognised qualifications, have been incredibly successful and we are already seeing a number of delegates stepping up to new roles.





## How does the Care Academy impact our staff?

The Care Academy launched in April 2022 and Alice Royle from Eavesbrook was part of the initial cohorts.



"I joined the Witherslack Group as I was inspired by the values expressed during the application and interview process. It was such a positive experience for me to find those values reflected in the Care Academy - there was a really strong message that we always put the children and young people first. The Care Academy training has been practically applicable and has stayed with me, helping me to improve my practice.

The Learning and Development Partners have such a lot of experience managing outstanding settings, and are able to tell us how the job really is - their stories really bring the role to life. That perspective, and the trust I can have in their advice, is so helpful once I am back at Eavesbrook and applying the learning.

I love the fact that the Care Academy induction is run over a longer period of time too - it means that we have regular opportunities to reconnect, to realign with the values and make sure what we do remains in the best interests of the young people. Having that ongoing guidance from the L&D Partners is invaluable, and it is great to know that the support is always there if I need it. As well as being educational, the Care Academy has been fun - it was great to connect with others who were starting at the same time, to have a laugh together and share our experiences."

Alison Lindsay, L&D Partner, was one of the team instrumental in the design and delivery of the Care Academy, with over 20 years' experience working in integrated education provisions and also extensive knowledge of the Group.

"I was managing Beech Tree House, loved the place the kids and the staff, but was ready for a new challenge - I was seconded to support new managers and help existing site settings, I loved passing on my knowledge and experience helping with the paperwork and systems. When I got the opportunity to work on setting up the Care Academy I knew that was the role for me. I was a little scared at first as standing in front of people was a little out of my comfort zone; however, it seemed to come naturally. I love seeing people all excited to have joined us, and helping them to succeed in their early careers. I remember what it was like for me as a new starter, and having someone guide and support me was amazing - I love that I can do that for people."



As a whole, we employ a blended learning approach using the 70:20:10 ratio, namely learning on the job, through relationships and networking, and supplemented through formal training programmes. In addition, our dedicated Learning and Development team work with regional directors to plan a training calendar incorporating both in-house and external training providers.

We share news and engage with employees on a regular basis through a number of different forums and mechanisms. Our weekly group-wide e-bulletin provides an opportunity to update employees on key activities within the business, while our staff intranet 'Me@WG' enables our people to access a wide range of resources, benefits and discounts at a click of a button.

## HR Initiatives



Launch of online reward platform allowing staff access to benefits, discounts and wellness activities.



External employee engagement survey to understand how employees are feeling.



New cloud-based applicant tracking system to support recruitment and onboarding processes.



Platform that enables our resourcing team to maximise use of talent pipelines for most business critical roles.

# Financial Report

## 2021 / 22

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# Financial Highlights

## 2021 / 22



### Revenue

Witherslack Group  
and Eagle House

**£143.7m** 28%  
(FY21: £113.2m)

### Operating Cashflow (before Taxation)

**£0.4m**

**1** Acquisition

**6** New School  
Developments

### Capital Expenditure (excluding Acquisition)

**£23.4m**  
(FY21 £14.8m)

### Net Assets

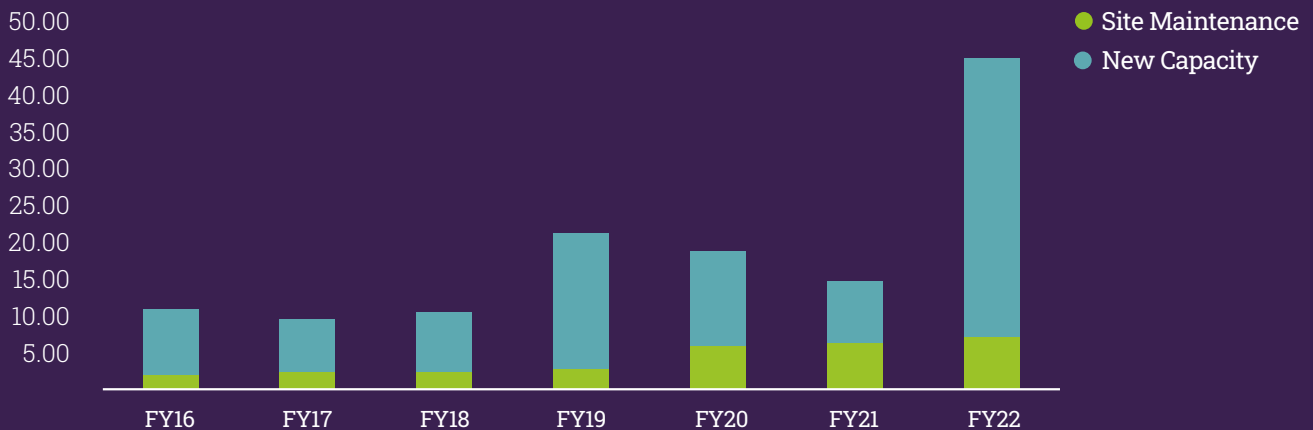
**£124.3m** 29%  
(FY21: £96.5m)

All profits are **reinvested** as **capital expenditure**

# Key Performance Indicators

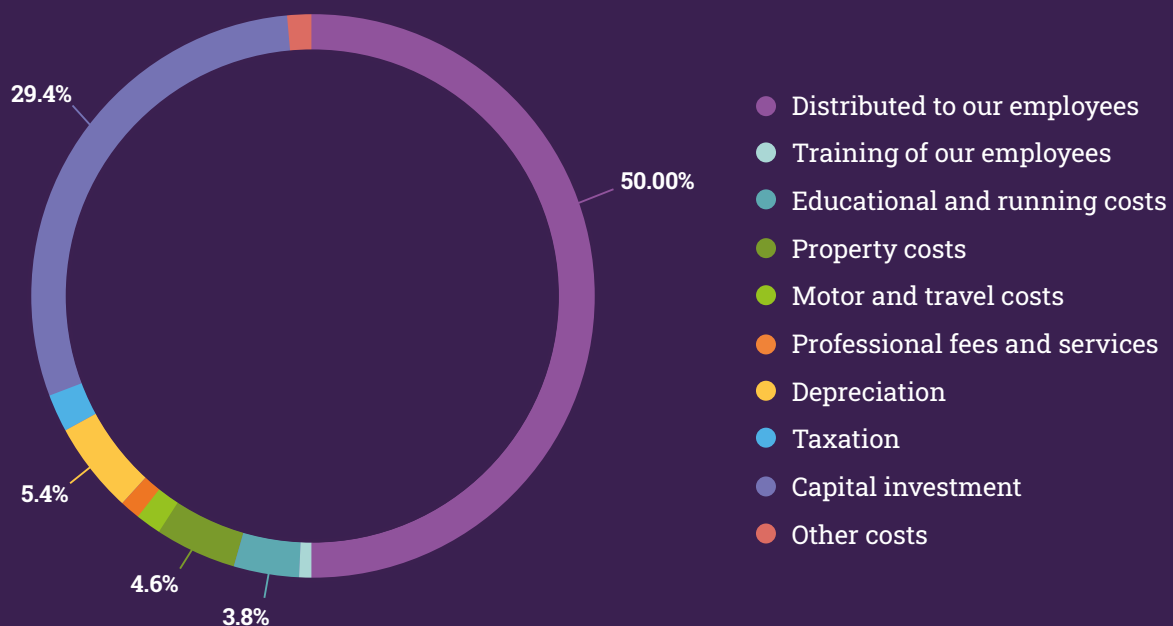
There is a significant shortfall in SEN places in the UK and Witherslack Group prides itself on investing all EBITDA generated into new provisions to help young people with SEN needs. Since 2016, we have invested over £130m in capital projects to help meet the shortfall of provision by adding over 1,100 new student places in education provisions.

## Capital Investment



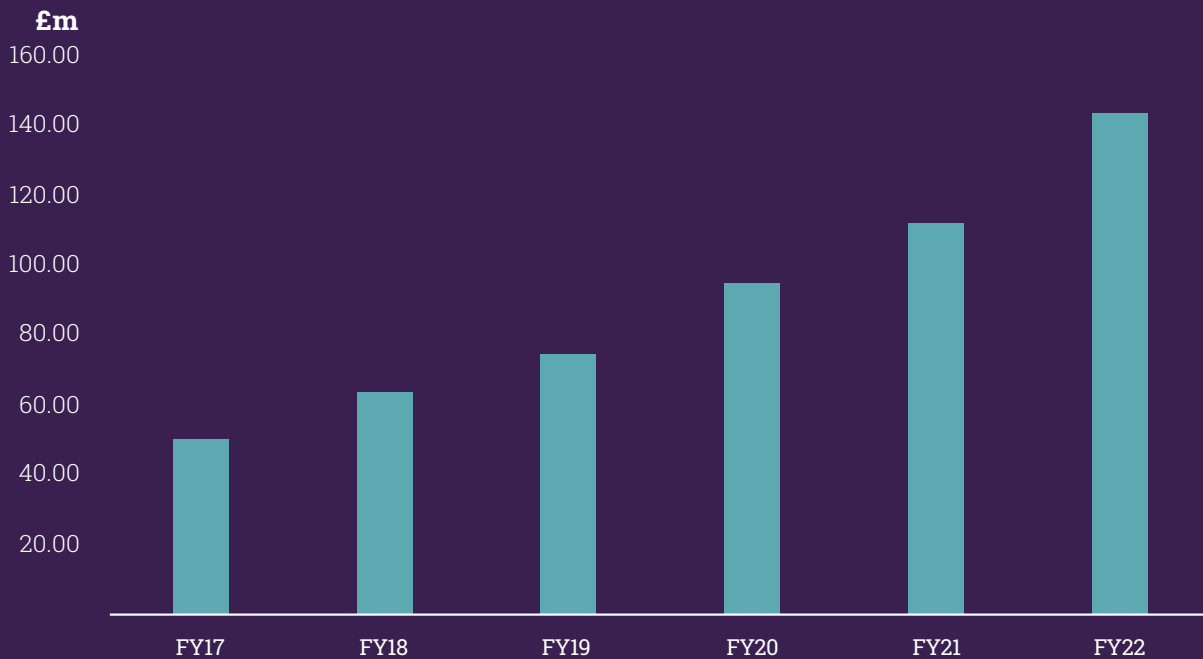
During this period capital expenditure has been greater than the profit made by the Company which reinforces our commitment to meeting the shortfall of provision.

## Expenditure FY22



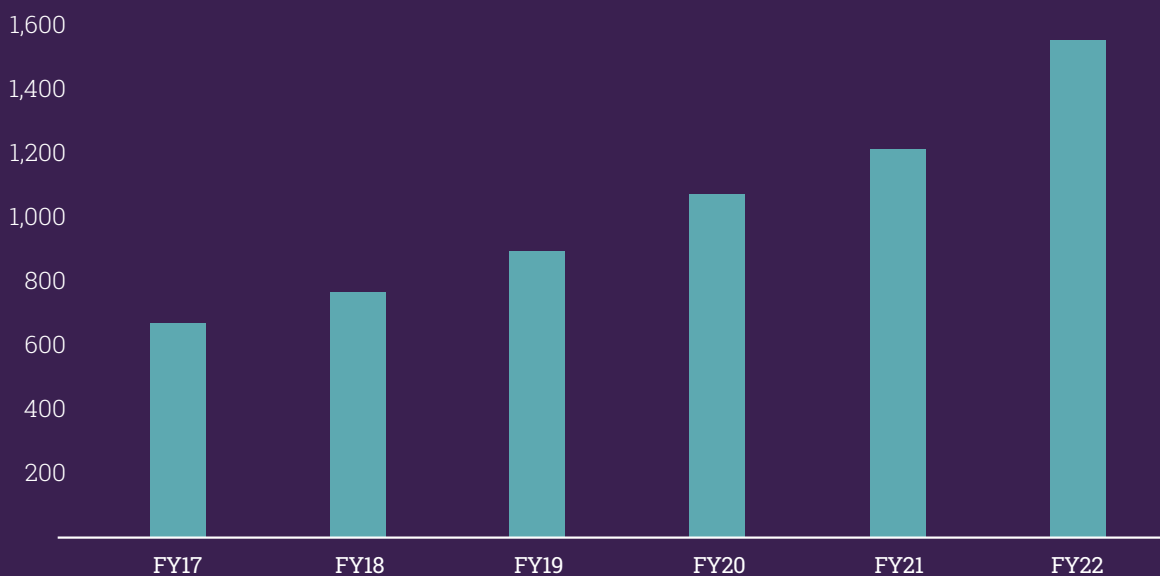
Witherslack Group's employment costs account for 50% of all expenditure, with a further 29.4% spent on capital investment projects. This is a significant investment in our growing workforce of over 2,000 colleagues who provide education and support to all young people across our educational establishments.

## Revenue



The significant investment in capital projects, employees and young people has resulted in continued growth. Revenue has increased from £50m in FY17 to £143m by FY22, with the number of schools and integrated education provisions ofsted registrations now totalling 63.

## Young People numbers



# Director's Report

## for the financial year ended 31 August 2022

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The principal activity of the Company during the year was the provision of education for children with special educational needs.

### Principal Activities

Witherslack Group aspires to be an exemplar of best practice for the education of children and young people with special educational needs, locally, regionally and nationally. This is achieved through the provision of specialist education across the UK through a network of thirty-five schools and thirty-four integrated education provisions. It has a clear view of its purpose and practice and this is articulated in the theoretical and philosophical aspects of its work. Outcomes for children and young people are closely monitored across a variety of metrics.

From a Head Office in Cumbria, combined with dedicated regional managers, the business places children and young people into our schools, integrated education provisions and learning centres across the UK, which is the lifeblood of the business. These places are funded by local authorities, our primary revenue stream.

In addition to organic growth, Witherslack Group has acquired a new business this year (Eagle House Group) with the intention to acquire more in the future. Acquisitions are targeted to deliver synergies, via targeting areas with a lower availability of existing educational suppliers to meet demand and to support the children and young people in those areas. To ensure Witherslack Group remains competitive we strive to obtain the highest level of quality by consistently investing in people, training and infrastructure to create a leading platform in the specialist education sector.

### Company Strategy

The core business strategy is to continue to drive organic growth in revenue through the acquisition and development of new sites. We also plan to expand and further develop existing sites to create more available spaces for children and young people who require specialist education.

Organic growth is complemented by strategic targeted acquisitions. The business continuously looks to expand its reach, actively researching opportunities for expansion into markets where we can leverage the use of our expertise.



## Company Strategy (continued)

Continuous reinvestment in our sites, staff and young people ensures that we maintain competitive in our market by offering the highest-quality service. Our track record of success and sector-leading Ofsted record scores has been achieved through an ethos of high aspiration, placement stability through our 'team around the child' approach, unique in-school therapy solutions and our inspiring environments. These all combine to optimise life opportunities for children and young people, give confidence to parents and carers, and deliver unmatched value for local authorities.

The Company's property pipeline is strong with new sites scheduled to open in the Bristol area and the South East in the coming year, along with extensions in existing schools. These freehold sites have already been acquired. Further new site opportunities are being pursued in a number of other regions. The Company position is particularly strengthened by its expansion into new geographical areas, much of which has taken place in response to requests by local authorities to open in their regions.

## Developments During the Year

Continued support for staff working from home has been achieved through the use of technology, including web-based functionality and video conferencing. Due to the isolated and difficult working conditions for some individuals we have endeavoured to do all we can to look after the mental and physical wellness of our employees.

A high level of communication and management support has been delivered throughout the period. External counselling is available for all staff and a 24-hour helpline is available for those who require any such support, along with online fitness classes to encourage social interaction outside of work.

The Group is actively working with experienced consultants to focus on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions throughout the business.

## Walker Guidelines

Witherslack Group (the "Group") is committed to complying with the Walker Guidelines (the "Guidelines") for increased disclosure and transparency in private equity and has included the additional disclosures as set out in the Guidelines in the 2021/2022 Annual Report.

The Board has decided not to upload the audited annual report for the Group and has instead provided the below explanation under the "comply or explain" principle as set out in the Guidelines.

The board believes that certain information included in the audited annual report is commercially sensitive, and, due to being the only company included in scope of the Guidelines in our sector, has decided not to include the audited annual report within the scope of this report. The audited annual report for the Group can be found on Companies House.



**Steve Bacon**  
Chief Financial Officer

## Controlling Party

The Company's immediate parent company is Witherslack Group (Holdings) Limited. Witherslack Topco Limited is the parent company of the smallest & largest group of which the company is a member, and for which the group financial statements of Witherslack Topco Limited are available at 11th Floor, 200 Aldersgate Street, London, England EC1A 4HD.

The controlling shareholder is Mubadala Capital, a global asset management company.

### The Board is comprised of:


<b>A Ghanem</b>	Independent Chair, Mubadala Capital
<b>T Fletcher Ray</b>	Chief Executive Officer (appointed 14 November 2022)
<b>S Bacon</b>	Chief Financial Officer
<b>J Carter</b>	Chief People Officer
<b>R J Wilkins</b>	Chief Operating Officer
<b>P Jones</b>	Chief Executive Officer (resigned 7 October 2022)
<b>J Jones</b>	Chief Commercial Officer (resigned 7 October 2022)
<b>J A Taylor</b>	Operations Director (Education) (resigned 31 July 2022)
<b>T Halford</b>	Non-Executive Director, Mubadala Capital
<b>M Al Ali</b>	Non-Executive Director, Mubadala Capital
<b>A Holloway</b>	Non-Executive Director, Livingbridge Equity Partners
<b>J Huxtable</b>	Non-Executive Director, Charme Capital Partners
<b>P Jones</b>	Non-Executive Director, Witherslack Topco Limited
<b>J Jones</b>	Non-Executive Director, Witherslack Topco Limited
<b>Maples Fiduciary Services (UK) Limited</b> - Secretary	



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