

## **Report on Chaigeley School**

### **July 2023**

Chaigeley started out as a hostel for evacuee children who could not be placed in private homes. After the war it was felt that it should continue as a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and it was the first such residential school to be recognised under the 1944 Education Act. It has always had close connections with the Quakers and today continues to reflect Quaker values. I am there as a representative of our AM.

There is a lovely old Georgian house, where the offices and staffroom etc are, and surrounding that are some houses from the days when it was a residential school, and extensive well maintained grounds. The school classrooms are well maintained, though will need major refurbishment or replacement before long.

It is now a day school and takes pupils from 12 Local Authorities. The children are aged 8 to 16 with varying needs which prevent them from attending main stream schools. Abilities vary too, with some having learning difficulties, and some going on to university. Every child is treated with respect, caring and tolerance; but they are stretched to reach their full potential, academically, practically and in self-development. Some children are taught at home and slowly introduced to coming into school. There are close relationships with parents too, and they are welcome to visit the school.

I'm going to give you some statistics because they show just how much the new head, Paul Lambert, has turned the school around in the short time he has been there. Exclusion rates in 2020 were 131 days from 35 pupils: in 2023 there were 26 days from 51 pupils. Parents report big improvements in behaviour at home. These days staff absence is low, and so is staff turnover. Parents are queuing up to get their children into the school, much of this is by word of mouth. Paul is about to start talks with the Local Authority to consider another site to house the KS2 children.

I love visiting Chaigeley! The atmosphere is warm and caring, the staff very professional with high morale, the pupils learning and playing in carefully planned environments. For instance, there is nothing on the walls except important information to keep stimulation at a low level. Every classroom is planned with work areas, comfort and relaxation zones, and top grade IT. Classes are small with staff at one for three children. There is a sensory house in the grounds, another house is for music, and there is a forest school. The children may receive counselling and they even have a therapy dog who comes in every week. Pupils in KS4 are given the opportunity to go to local colleges where they can practise building skills, mechanics, sports like boxing and karting, and all the 5 year 11 leavers have college places.

The school is particularly pleased with the progress in making connections with the local community. They visit the Men's Shed, made a scarecrow for the village competition and took part in the Rose Queen celebration.

Last month 5 pupils and 4 staff went to Cologne in Germany for a short break. It was a great success and was paid for by an historic Quaker fund.

There is a robust and imaginative wellbeing policy for staff and pupils, and I am working with the two staff members who are developing this . I am also on the Curriculum Group and working with a member of staff on gaining Autism Accreditation. My Link member of staff is Amy who teaches art and cookery. They are in the middle of getting a whole new kitchen, so I've not been able to get together much with her, but I'm looking forward to getting more involved next term.

They are financially sound, but are looking to rebuild some old classrooms and possibly add a new site, so fundraising is a priority.

I am the only Quaker governor now, and they are very keen to recruit another two at least. I was so warmly welcomed and my input is always valued. If you would like to consider being a governor at this wonderful school, please ask me for some more information. There is so much more I could tell you.

Signed,  
Hilary Brooks,  
Quaker Governor/Trustee  
July 2023