



**Ambitious  
about Autism**

# Annual report and accounts 2022–23



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# Our purpose, vision, mission and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.



## Our purpose

We help autistic children and young people to be themselves.



## Our vision

Our vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.



## Our mission

We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.



## Our values

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do.

**We are ambitious**  
for autistic children and young  
people and our work.



# Foreword: Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

This has been an exciting year of growth and development for Ambitious about Autism, enabling us to stand with even more autistic children and young people and help them realise their ambitions.

In the second year of our **Time for Ambition** strategy we laid the groundwork to expand our educational offer. We spent the year preparing for the opening of Spring School in Kingston and completed plans for the merger of Ambitious about Autism with St. John's School and College in Brighton. Both opportunities allow us to share learnings, expand our expertise and offer more for autistic children and young people.

During World Autism Acceptance Week we continued to raise acceptance of autism, taking part with Vanish in an influential and award-winning advertising campaign that sought to increase public understanding of autistic girls and women. This year we also

appointed well-known public figure, television presenter Gregg Wallace MBE, as our new ambassador.

As the government moved forward with plans to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, we launched our national campaign, Written Off?, to ensure decision-makers listen to autistic children, young people and their families.

Through Employ Autism we continue to expand our partnerships with national employers to create meaningful employment experiences for more autistic young people.



We thank our long-standing integral partner Pears Foundation for their continuous support. We also thank Marsh McLennan, our four-year strategic partner.

This year was also another successful year for our challenge events, with dozens of participants taking part in the London Marathon and Rapha's Manchester to London ride, raising vital funds to support our work. Meanwhile, our growing list of corporate partners also achieved amazing success this year, raising funds and awareness through a range of activities.

None of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, so we continued to invest in our people to make Ambitious about Autism a great place to work.

Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. We can only do this thanks to you: our wonderful children and young people, parents and carers, generous partners, supporters and staff. Your continuing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.



**Neil Goulden**  
Chair of Trustees



**Jolanta Lasota**  
Chief Executive

# Our impact this year

Over 

**£3 million**

funds raised to support autistic children and young people.

**800** 

autistic young people connected with others through the Ambitious Youth Network.

More 

**than 1,500**

active members found support through our online community Talk about Autism.

**751** 

young people receive tailored careers information and employability sessions.

**164** 

autistic people accessed a paid experience of work via our trained employer partners.

**327** 

pupils and learners were supported across our schools and colleges.

**60** 

autistic young people took part in the pilot of our new post-diagnosis support online course.

**72** 

pupils and learners from our schools and college were supported to move into employment or a new setting.

# Excellent education



Our belief is unshakeable: all autistic children and young people have the right to an excellent and inclusive education. We continue to think and act innovatively to provide the best possible outcomes for autistic children and young people in our education settings.

This year we expanded our schools and college network with the addition of St. John's College in Brighton, while we continued to develop our existing settings to maintain the high educational quality we are known for. We also supported pupils and learners in their career education and campaigned for system-wide improvements in response to proposed government reforms.



## Spring School

As we progressed towards a September 2023 opening, we were delighted that our community engagement work was nominated for an award by the Multi-Academy Trust Association (MATA), recognising our collaborative work with parents, carers, education providers and residents.



## The Rise School

Year 7 pupils settled in very quickly as the new term began. Year 12 pupils also made a seamless transition into the Rise Sixth Form and have made an excellent start to their courses.

Year 11 pupils took their first IGCSE English exam, working very hard and showing real resilience.

In Autumn term, members of the School Council organised a huge amount of food to be collected and delivered to a local food bank, to celebrate the Harvest Festival.



## The Rise Sixth Form

The Rise Sixth Form pupils achieved some very positive outcomes this year. Eight young people secured offers from their first choice of university, one took on an apprenticeship and one secured full-time employment.



Pupil and learner numbers at the end of July 2023.

TreeHouse School

# 99 pupils

Ambitious College

# 94 learners

The Rise School

# 135 pupils

## TreeHouse School

TreeHouse School became the first special school in the UK to invest in innovative personal sensory regulation software, Cubbie, providing pupils with a much-needed space to regulate their senses and relax outside lessons.



## Ambitious College

### Zubair's story

Autistic young people and their families have benefitted from assistive technology and support at Ambitious College, helping them develop their IT and communication skills.

Among those to experience this new technology is 23-year-old Zubair, who is non-speaking and attends Ambitious College's north London Pears campus.

Zubair's mum Sameena said: **"Zubair has always been keen to communicate his needs to us and this scheme has provided him with an incredible opportunity to communicate independently, thanks to the support of his dedicated IT teacher."**

**"He is now able to type out certain sentences on his own and can also communicate his wants and needs**



**when using the keyboard at home. Zubair couldn't have received this level of innovative support from any other placement, and we are deeply grateful to Ambitious College for always providing him with the highest level of education and support to fulfil his potential as a young autistic adult."**



## Supported internships

This year, autistic young people, aged 19–25, took up a supported internship at the Whittington Hospital. They took on a variety of roles in fields such as maintenance, pharmacy distribution and administration.

On graduating, four interns were offered employment. Prayer secured a role at a nursery where she has learned sign language to support a deaf child, while Taylor now works full-time at the Whittington Hospital as a porter. Adam has been offered a job working with the pharmacy distribution team at the hospital and Samuel\* is working for a company that makes bespoke light fittings.



\*name has been changed

## St. John's School and College

In April 2023, the Boards of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and St. John's School and College in Brighton announced the merger of the two charities.

St. John's College, a residential independent specialist college, supports autistic young people aged 16–25 with broader special educational needs. The college offers day and residential places.

Each learner's individual strengths, interests and ambitions shape their curriculum. Learners access a wider range of learning, employability and social opportunities through partnership working across the city and beyond.

In June 2023, before the merger took effect, the Board of Trustees of St. John's School and College made the difficult decision to close St. John's School at the end of the summer term of 2023, leaving St. John's College to join the Ambitious family in September.

On 1 September, the St. John's School and College charity joined the Ambitious about Autism group as a wholly owned subsidiary,



with Trustees in common. On 1 October 2023, the assets and operations of St. John's transferred to the Ambitious about Autism charity in full. Employment of the staff at St. John's School and College also transferred to Ambitious about Autism.

This merger reflects the shared values of both organisations and our joint commitment to supporting autistic children and young people to achieve positive outcomes. By bringing the two charities together, we aim to provide high-quality education for more autistic children and young people, and to share best practice and resources.

## Written Off? campaign

Our Written Off? campaign is a response to the reforms proposed in the government's '**Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan**'.

In November 2022, with the publication of our 'Written Off?' report, we launched the campaign, calling on decision-makers to protect SEND funding and families' legal rights to support.

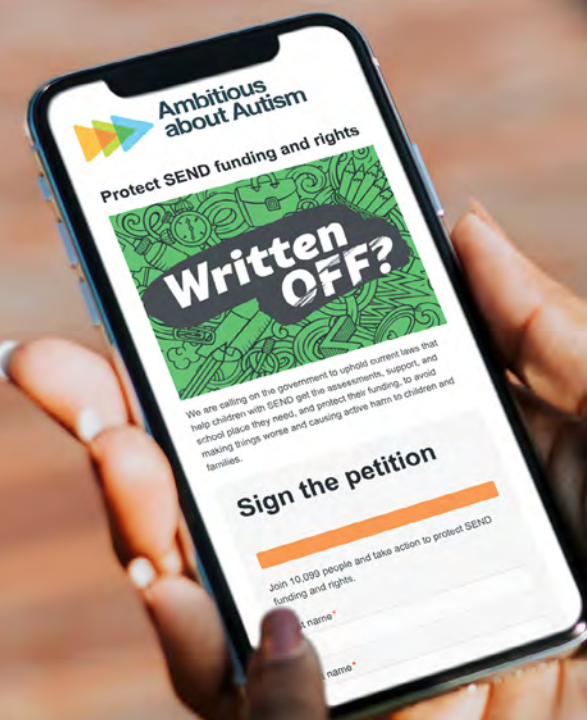
The report sets out our policy recommendations in detail and reflects the views of 2,000 autistic young people, parents and carers, who have all told us the same thing: the system is broken.

The **Written Off?** petition has attracted thousands of signatures.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan includes proposals that deeply worry many parents and carers – such as tailored lists, national funding bands and mandatory mediation. We are keeping a close eye on the trials of these policies to ensure they do not lead to an undermining of families' rights.

Also this year, members of our Ambitious Youth Network met with Robin Walker MP, the Chair of the Parliamentary Education Select Committee, while at one of the committee's hearings our Chief Executive, Jolanta Lasota, gave evidence that was later included in the committee's recently published report on childcare in the early years.

Ambitious about Autism continues to be an active member of the Autism Education Trust.



Find out more about the  
**Written Off? petition**



## Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our educational approach, developed to put quality of life at the centre of all we do. It is based upon a learner's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

Our initial evaluation of the impact of our Ambitious Approach is showing positive outcomes for pupils and learners, parents and carers and staff.



### Quality of life

Our data suggests that the quality of life of pupils and learners improved over the course of the year, as endorsed by 75% of parents and carers we surveyed.



### Classroom environment

Environmental assessments showed that our classrooms were more enabling at the end of the academic year than at the beginning.



### Access to debriefing

We have developed a more proactive and preventative approach to supporting pupils.



### Understanding of the Ambitious Approach

The majority of staff surveyed across all settings reported that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they have the competence needed to effectively implement the Ambitious Approach, indicating that development work in this area has had a positive impact.





# Employment and enterprise



We want every autistic young person to have access to good careers education, including experience of work, relevant to their aspirations, strengths and abilities. Working alongside autistic young people, we equip them to progress to employment and develop transferable life skills.

Our employability programme seeks to remove the barriers to employment that autistic young people face. We work closely with employers to enable them to access a pool of uniquely talented autistic employees, providing training and support to those organisations to increase their confidence in autism and neurodiversity in the workplace.

Our impact:

- 164 young people accessed paid work experience via our trained employer partners, including 87 in our Civil Service summer internships programme.
- 751 young people received tailored careers information and employability sessions.
- 330 careers and employability professionals attended training sessions to understand how to adapt their practices for their autistic clients, ensuring they get the best support on their pathway to employment.
- 91 employers undertook training on understanding autism in the workplace, with 51 going on to offer paid work experience to autistic young people.
- We delivered presentations at 16 events and conferences to over 1800 delegates.

## Bruno's story

"I took part in an Employ Autism programme at the Civil Service and my role was based in the digital markets team.

"During this internship I learned so much about how the Civil Service works and worked with some amazing colleagues who supported me throughout. The most interesting part for me was finding out how important policy decisions are made in this country.

"I believe the Employ Autism programme is very important because it gives autistic young people, such as myself, an experience of what it is like working in an important institution like the Civil Service.

"I think that for autistic people the paths to employment can sometimes be quite daunting and overwhelming, so interacting with people who had their own unique paths was eye-opening as well as motivating. It also gave my colleagues the chance to experience working with an autistic person and gain an understanding of how their autistic colleagues can be supported.

"It was a very positive and enjoyable experience that benefited me, and I would recommend the Employ Autism programme to other autistic young people."



## Employ Autism

Despite the continuing challenges of an unstable external environment, the Employ Autism programme goes from strength to strength.

We successfully expanded partnerships with both national and smaller employers across the country. In March, we launched the Ambitious about Autism Covenant for Employers (ACE), an initiative created in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to establish inclusive and supportive workplaces for autistic people.

## Summer parliamentary reception

In July, our president, Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE, hosted a parliamentary reception at the House of Lords to highlight the power of autism inclusion in the workplace. The event was an opportunity for autistic young people, parents and carers, funders, employability professionals and employers to celebrate the progress of Employ Autism to date and meet with government officials from all sides of the political spectrum.

We presented early findings from our independent evaluation, revealing that over 80% of young people who have taken part in the programme have been offered a contract extension or permanent role.

We were joined at the event by Minister of State for Disabled People, Tom Pursglove MP, and Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP, who is leading the government's review designed to boost employment opportunities for autistic people.



**We all realise that the figure of less than three in ten autistic people in work is completely unacceptable. I couldn't be clearer that this shouldn't be a barrier to employment, and we need to be ambitious about this and work together in a spirit of partnership to improve outcomes and opportunities."**

Tom Pursglove MP



## Careers education in our settings

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school, and in further and higher education.

In September 2022, Ambitious College and TreeHouse School gained the Skills Builder Bronze Award for their work in careers education, putting them in a select group of schools and colleges that have demonstrated a commitment to building students' essential skills.

National Careers Week took place during 6–10 March 2023. Each educational setting organised its own timetable of activities for the week, engaging a total of 206 learners. More than 20 employers also got involved. One learner from Ambitious College visited an RSPCA clothes store to help sort and label books, resulting in an offer of long-term work experience.

## Halima's story

Halima\* is a learner at Ambitious College who studies the 'Preparing for Employment' curriculum course. Before joining, Halima had no previous experience of employment but she expressed her desire to work in a hair salon.

Having always enjoyed styling her own hair, her class teacher and the college employment specialist saw this passion as a vehicle for Halima to develop and progress multiple skills. This started with Halima exploring the role of a hairdresser and improving her understanding of the role's various responsibilities.

After learning about the role of a hairdresser, Halima washed and styled staff members' hair during enrichment sessions. She learnt the appropriate steps by reviewing job descriptions and task breakdowns with the employment specialist, leading to Halima installing hair extensions for staff members at college. She also delivered a session on Afro hairstyles for Black History Month.

\*Name has been changed.



After continuing to build on her skills in college, Halima completed external work experience with a hair salon in London. She applied the skills learnt in college and acquired new skills using professional hair equipment.

Halima's journey is a testament to the importance of allowing young people to follow their passions in a way that supports their growth and development.

# Family and relationships



We want to make sure that families are fully informed and have the skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people. We are a trusted source of support, providing families with high-quality, relevant, accurate and accessible information and support.



## Learner and family services

The Learner and Family Services team supports autistic children and young people on their journey into school or college and all the way through to the next stage in their life.

Queries and applications across our education settings grow year on year. This year, our Admissions team processed a total of 880. The team organises visits to our settings and supports the smooth and efficient running of the admissions process – ensuring all decisions are robust and lawful. The team has also successfully helped 72 young people move on from our settings into education, employment, training or community settings.

## Arran's story

Arran\* had been a pupil at TreeHouse School for more than 10 years. During the last two years of his schooling, the complexity and impact of his obsessive-compulsive disorder became more heightened.

Although Arran enjoyed school and learning, he became more rigid about how he should travel to and enter school, where items were to be placed, and how others would sit or stand – becoming upset if these patterns were not followed. His day became focused on ensuring that the correct pattern of events was followed. Any changes to his expected routine led to him becoming anxious and visibly upset.

Through discussions with Arran and his parents, we were able to develop a behaviour support plan that would break down the individual components of the challenges he faced into smaller parts that he could manage. Our initial focus was on helping Arran finish a routine with fewer repetitions.

\*Name has been changed.



We also encouraged language and communication to help him tell others when he needed more time or if he was ready to listen. We gradually increased expectations in line with what Arran was able to manage.

Arran's hard work and our consistent approach meant that he was gradually able to complete routines in a more flexible manner, sometimes skipping them altogether. He was able to visit locations he previously enjoyed, such as the local park.

This meant that a successful college transition was initiated before the end of his school term and continued into the first half term of college. Arran is now successfully attending college every day with the support of his tutor.

## Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is the online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people. It's a place where parents and carers can be themselves and connect with others who share their joys and understand their worries as a parent or carer of an autistic child.

In May, we launched our new webinar series, 'Talking Tuesdays', providing attendees with autism-specific advice from experts, parent advocates and a range of contributors with a professional interest in, and lived experience of, autism.

Webinar topics this year have included: mental capacity, understanding autism, supporting neurotypical siblings, and securing your child's future with wills and trusts.



**I just wanted to say how utterly wonderful the talk about sibling support from Joss Lambert was. He was so honest and truthful, yet quite obviously so caring and understanding of his brother. Thanks for what you do."**

Talk about Autism community member





## Autism Central

This year we became a partner for a new free education programme called Autism Central. The service offers co-designed and co-delivered, high-quality and accessible autism information, education and coaching for families and carers. Autism Central has been commissioned by NHS England's Workforce, Training and Education team, and is being delivered nationally by nine not-for-profit organisations. In partnership with the charity Contact, we manage regional hubs for London and the Midlands.



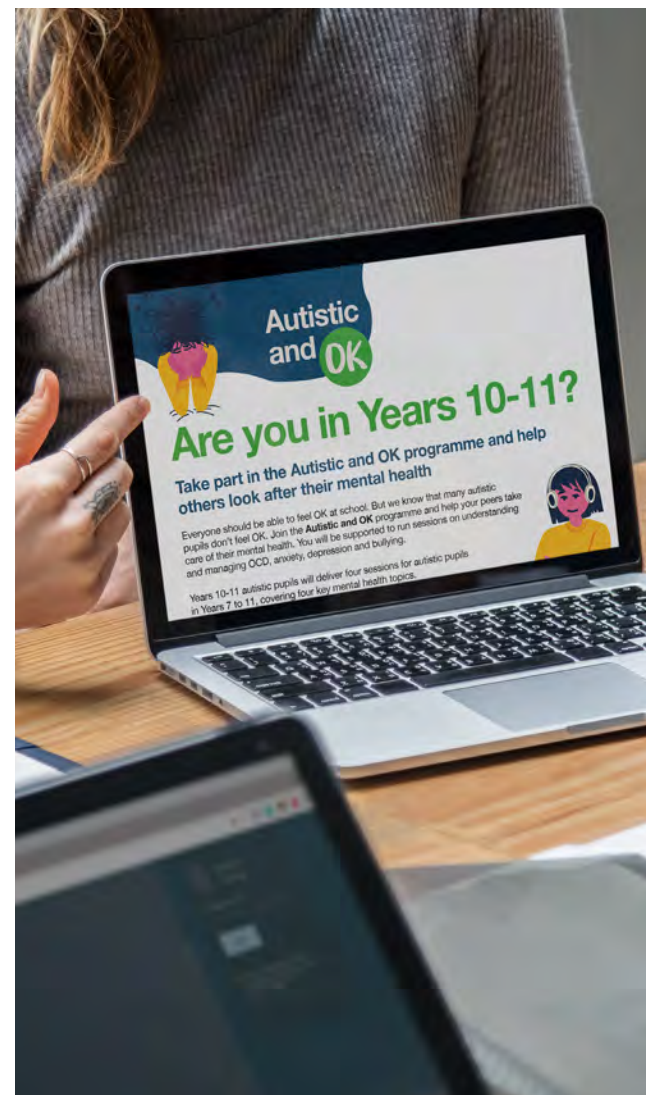
## Autistic and OK

We also announced a new partnership with Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation to develop a groundbreaking mental health programme in mainstream secondary schools.

We know that getting the right help early is vital to ensuring young people can achieve their potential. The Autistic and OK programme has been created to empower autistic young people to take control of their own mental wellbeing, understand themselves and feel OK.

The sessions – on understanding and managing OCD, anxiety, depression and bullying – will equip autistic young people with the knowledge and self-awareness to look after their mental wellbeing. They will also learn the tools and techniques to manage their mental health.

We developed the resources with a group of autistic youth advisors from our Ambitious Youth Network and a panel of experts, including a clinical psychologist, a training consultant and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).



The toolkit will be piloted in 20 secondary schools from September 2023, with the aim of rolling out the programme nationally in 2024.

## Post-diagnosis support programme

We worked with 10 autistic young people from the Ambitious Youth Network to establish what support they would have wanted and used these experiences to form a six-week online intervention. The young people named the online course ‘Understanding you, Discovering You’ to reflect their post-diagnosis journey.

The online course supports autistic young people to explore what autism is and develop a positive autistic identity, and equips them with practical skills, with the aim of improving their mental health.

We also commissioned a team of researchers, led by University College London’s Centre for Research in Autism in Education (CRAE), to help collate evidence linking autistic identity and wellbeing, investigate inequalities in accessing post-diagnostic support, and lead

an evaluation of the co-production and initial pilot of the online course. Autistic young people contributed to the research and the findings were due in October 2023.

To support the programme, we also formed an expert reference group, made up of sector experts, such as autistic people, Autistica, the National Autistic Society, leading clinical psychologists and academics, to help scrutinise and challenge the programme, and disseminate the online course.

The programme has been a valuable experience and we thank all reference group members for their time and guidance.

The programme aims to create an evidence base to influence policy and practice around post-diagnosis support.



**I really liked the supportive and judgement-free environment we created.”**

Autistic participant of the ‘Understanding You, Discovering You’ online course.



# Active citizenship in the community



Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything that we do. Co-production is a vital part of our work, in our schools and colleges, and in the national support we offer to autistic young people.



## Ambitious Youth Network

Our UK-wide platform for autistic young people now has over 800 members. Over the past year, the Participation team has been working to make the platform more accessible through easy-read versions of documents and videos explaining how to use the platform.



**The Ambitious Youth Network has been a lifeline for many people, including me. Ambitious about Autism is the only place with a youth network of its kind and I am simply a by-product of an excellent service made by people who saw the difficulties young autistic people were having and decided to create a safe place.”**

Harvey, a member of the Ambitious Youth Network

## Youth Council

Our Youth Council is a group of autistic young people aged 16–25 who make sure that all our work reflects the views and needs of autistic children and young people. They report to our Board of Trustees.

The Youth Council met in March and provided insight and feedback into the National Services strategy. This was then presented at the March Board meeting where Youth Council members recorded video updates.

## 13–15 hubs

We have secured funding to pilot a hubs programme in local authorities and schools. The aim of this programme is to create resources and information for hubs to deliver peer sessions to autistic young people in their local areas.





WINNER OF THE  
**DIVERSITY IN  
ADVERTISING  
AWARD**



## World Autism Acceptance Week 2023

We partnered with Vanish to give a voice to the experiences of autistic girls in a high-profile, national advertising campaign. The **Me, My Autism & I** campaign, which was awarded a £1 million airtime prize by Channel 4, aimed to help autistic girls be seen, heard and supported. Members of our Ambitious Youth Network played a key role in the campaign's development.

The campaign featured an award-winning short television film, webpage and exhibition, and was supported by model and autism campaigner Christine McGuinness. Together with Vanish, we also published new research highlighting the gender gap in autism diagnosis.

Ambitious about Autism featured in a short film on Channel 4, directed by Oscar-winning director Tom Hooper. The film focused on a 15-year-old autistic girl called Ash (portrayed by an autistic actor and her real family) and her special connection to a treasured hoodie.

The film ultimately went on to win a prestigious Gold Lion at the Cannes Lions Festival.

We also took part in an exhibition at a gallery on the Southbank that showcased the stories of 12 young autistic girls and the clothing items that help make their world more comfortable. The exhibition included the story of a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.



Find out more about the  
**Me, My Autism & I**  
campaign





# Our partners and supporters



We have achieved a great deal thanks to our amazing partners and supporters, who enable us to champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Thanks to the kindness and dedication of the public, philanthropists, companies, trusts and foundations, we raised £3,177k in 2022–23.

We are grateful to all the partners and supporters who have stood by us. Their continuing commitment gives us stability and allows us to expand our work in response to an ever-growing need. We are also pleased to have new partners join our Ambitious family, and we look forward to all that we will achieve together, as we enter the final year of our Time for Ambition strategy.

## Philanthropy, trusts and foundations

The support received from philanthropists, trusts and foundations is essential to the growth and diversification of our services, and plays a significant role in making our mission and vision a reality. During this cost-of-living crisis, we are grateful to have received dedicated grants from foundations, helping us to minimise risks and build capacity at a time of increased uncertainty.



## Corporate partnerships

Our ever-expanding list of corporate partners achieved amazing success, raising vital funds through a range of activities this year, all while championing autism in the workplace. We are particularly thrilled to have welcomed on board new partners, resulting in the launch of new projects that have brought about transformational change for the organisation and autistic children and young people.

## Legacy gifts

We are grateful to those who chose to leave a gift to Ambitious about Autism in their will and have been lucky recipients of generous donations. Our legators are helping to ensure that we can continue to stand with autistic children and young people well into the future.







## Events and fundraising challenges

This year we were able to grow our presence and increase donations through fundraising events. We'd like to thank our partners and supporters for supporting these inspiring events.

### Ambitious 220

This year's Rapha Manchester to London ride was a record breaker. Taking place in June, we welcomed 160 riders taking part in the 220-mile ride. Led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism Ambassador Simon Mottram, we raised £250,000. Our star fundraisers were Graham Cuninghame and Patrick Limpus, who raised £15,000.

*Rapha*

### London Marathon

In April, 27 supporters took part in the iconic London Marathon and together they raised £85,000 for autistic children and young people. One runner, Paul Evans, set a new world record by becoming the fastest man to complete the London Marathon dressed as a knight.

### Night of Ambition

In October, we hosted our gala fundraising event, Night of Ambition, in partnership with TalkTalk. The event raised £401,000 through ticket sales, live auction prizes and generous donations from guests.

Thank you to our host, Gregg Wallace MBE, and everyone who came together to stand with autistic children and young people to raise vital money and support our work.





## Our strategic partners

### Pears Foundation

Pears Foundation has been an integral partner to our work for nearly two decades. As the founding partner of new programmes and education services, such as Employ Autism and Ambitious College, the foundation helped us create positive, long-lasting change for autistic children and young people. Its unwavering commitment is remarkable, and the support for our core foundations demonstrates philanthropic leadership and enables us to maintain stability, innovate and grow.



### Marsh McLennan

Marsh McLennan is our four-year strategic partner with a goal to create brighter futures by empowering talent and unlocking opportunities.

As well as fundraising, colleagues have volunteered their time and expertise to support many aspects of Ambitious about Autism's work, including pro bono support for strategic projects.

Through Marsh McLennan, our Employability and Training team has piloted an 'autism confident' employer framework. As part of this process, over 1,000 people have attended awareness sessions on autism, over 100 managers have attended Employ Autism training, we have reviewed policies and workplace practices, and 20 autistic young people have undertaken work-experience placements.

We also ran the 'Mentoring Talent' programme at Marsh McLennan for the second year, giving employees the opportunity to mentor autistic jobseekers around their career goals. All mentors receive two full days of training to be able to properly support their mentees. In the 2023 cohort there are 18 mentoring pairs. By developing these programmes, we've been able to find out what works and so create a blueprint for working with other employers in the future.

Together, we can create brighter futures, and Marsh McLennan is setting a high standard for all other major employers.



## TalkTalk

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk since 2006. In addition to its generous sponsorship of Night of Ambition, TalkTalk is a leading Employ Autism partner and welcomed five young autistic interns to its workforce in 2022–23.



## Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised more than £1.75m since its first cycling challenge in aid of Ambitious about Autism in 2014.

Through its fantastic innovation, support and friendship, Rapha continues to stand with autistic children and young people through its commitment to delivering a first-class cycling challenge, raising much-needed funds.



## Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation

As highlighted earlier in the report, through our exciting new partnership with Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation, we're developing a programme to change thousands of young lives.

The Z Zurich Foundation grant is funding a national programme to support the mental wellbeing of autistic pupils in mainstream secondary schools.

The programme aims to reach thousands of autistic young people in the UK and will also provide support and guidance to thousands of parents and caregivers to help them care proactively for their mental wellbeing.

Our employability and training team is currently working with Zurich to produce a series of e-learning modules for staff to complete to develop their autism-confident practice.



## Reckitt Benckiser UK

Through our partnership with its brand Vanish, Reckitt Benckiser UK has committed to three years of activity for World Autism Acceptance Week, including our national Me, My Autism & I campaign, which launched this year. Through on-pack promotion, Vanish is raising funds to help create a world where autistic girls and young people are heard, included and supported.

We are also working with Reckitt Benckiser UK to provide autism in the workplace training to the organisation's Employees and Talent and Acquisition to establish more inclusive hiring policies. We have also supported the creation of an internal neurodiversity handbook.



## Lead funding partners

### Bally's Foundation

We are delighted to have partnered with Bally's Foundation, whose funding has enabled us to pilot a new programme focused on post-diagnosis support. Through a six-week online course we help autistic young people to meet their peers, learn about autism and explore what their diagnosis means for them.

We are proud that everything we have done this year has been co-produced and co-researched with autistic young people. Their input has been invaluable. Bally's Foundation's gift will enable us to refine this programme and reach 5,000 autistic young people.



### City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation's grant is enabling us to make sure autistic young Londoners make a positive transition to a place of their choosing when they leave Ambitious College. This takes a tremendous amount of expertise and planning from our dedicated Learner and Family Services team. City Bridge Foundation's multi-year grant enables us to plan with confidence and means we can continue to be there for our learners when they need us most. We were particularly grateful for the additional grant payment this year, in recognition of the financial impact of the cost-of-living crisis.



### Constable Educational Trust

We are delighted to have received the support of the Constable Educational Trust once again. They were a significant partner in enhancing facilities at our founding TreeHouse School. Today, they continue to stand with autistic young people, enabling us to expand our reach through the Ambitious Youth Network, ensuring autistic young people can access peer support and connect with others going through similar experiences.

The Constable Trust



## Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support underpins the work of our dynamic youth participation programme. We are delighted to have worked with the Foundation over the past year on several initiatives, and thanks to the Foundation's support, we can externally evaluate the programme's impact. We were particularly grateful that the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, awarding us an additional grant.



## Graham and Susan Tobbell

Graham and Susan are deeply loyal partners of Ambitious about Autism. Thanks to their support, we have been able to diversify opportunities for autistic young people. This simply would not have been possible without Graham and Susan's commitment to delivering better outcomes for autistic young people, providing them with a chance to shine.

## Joseph Levy Foundation

The Joseph Levy Foundation has played a key role in the development of our charity over the past few years. It has singlehandedly enabled us to develop and embed our Ambitious Approach to education within our settings, and to share this externally to reach many thousands of families and professionals.

The foundation has also funded our Learner and Family Services team to ensure the families in our settings are supported during times of need. We are deeply grateful to the Joseph Levy Foundation for its friendship and continuing support.



## MariaMarina Foundation

We are grateful for the long-standing support and dedication shown by the MariaMarina Foundation since 2016. A committed funder of Ambitious College for the last six years, MariaMarina Foundation has continued to be instrumental in the expansion of the College, allowing us to implement an ambitious employability strategy that spans all our educational settings, building pathways to employment for autistic young people. We were particularly grateful that the MariaMarina Foundation recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and awarded us an additional grant.



## National Lottery Community Fund

Over the past two years, the National Lottery Community Fund has continued its support for our Employ Autism programme throughout this second year of a three-year grant. With this lead grant we've been able to help hundreds of autistic young people across the country to improve their employability skills and work towards a more independent future. It's also helped us to support thousands of family members, careers guidance professionals and employers to create a more inclusive working world.

We were especially grateful that the National Lottery Community Fund recognised the impact of the cost-of-living crisis this year and awarded us an uplift on our grant. We are so grateful for its continuing support and friendship.



## The Clothworkers' Foundation

As a long-standing friend of Ambitious about Autism, the Clothworkers' Foundation has been involved in developing many strategic projects since 2006, transforming the lives of hundreds of autistic children and young people. During our partnership, the Foundation made a significant contribution to the original construction of TreeHouse School, supported the school's renovations in 2021 and has been a committed supporter of our family support provision at Ambitious College.





# A huge thanks ❤️ to our partners and supporters



Gregg Wallace MBE, television presenter.  
Appointed Ambitious about Autism  
ambassador in May 2023.



## Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation  
Marsh McLennan  
Rapha Racing Ltd  
TalkTalk Group plc  
Z Zurich Foundation

## Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell  
Bally's Foundation  
Constable Educational Trust  
The Clothworkers' Foundation  
City Bridge Foundation  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Joseph Levy Foundation  
MariaMarina Foundation  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Reckitt Benckiser

## Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management  
Ali MacCallum  
Apply Recruitment  
BBC Children in Need  
Bernard Sunley Foundation  
Beatrice Laing Trust  
Bradbury Foundation  
Carlyle Group  
Chapman Charitable Trust  
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson  
Chris Pond  
Collaboration Company  
CIB  
Danuta Gray  
Duke of Newcastle 1986 Charitable Trust  
Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia  
Ellandi  
Elizabeth Stanton  
Sir Harvey McGrath  
Health Education England

Hornsey Parochial Charities  
Hospital Saturday Fund  
Jean Levenant  
Jean Carter \*  
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant  
Ketchum  
Koral Anderson  
Kumar Tangri  
Kusuma Trust UK  
Laurie Edmans CBE  
Lesley Longstone  
Lloyds of London  
LNER  
The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE  
Lucy Nutt  
M/Six  
Magnus Schoeman  
Mark Naughton  
Martyn Craddock  
Masonic Charitable Foundation

\*signifies a legacy gift.

Matt Davis and Eliza Mishcon

Matt Hutnell

Michael Clark

The Mulberry Trust

Neil Goulden

Nick and Pippa Medd

Nick Hornby

Paul Disley-Tindell

Phil Haslam

Philippa Stobbs

PIMCO Foundation

Prospero World

Red Brick Road

Sally Cairns

Salt

Simon Clements

Simon Hillson

Simon and Lucy Mottram

Snowbility

Sue Adkins

The Harebell Centenary Fund

The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

The&Partnership

Tim Barber

Tottenham Grammar School Foundation

Tristia Harrison CBE

Dr Virginia Bovell OBE

And all our other supporters, including those  
who have chosen to remain anonymous.

# Our fundraising approach



## Fundraising practices

We adhere to the highest fundraising standards, which we recognise to be essential in retaining the trust and support of our much-valued donors.

We pay the voluntary levy to register with the Fundraising Regulator and ensure that our practices comply with the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We are also a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising.

We maintain up-to-date policies for: our fundraising code of conduct; fundraising ethics; compliments and complaints; and whistleblowing. We ensure that all team members understand and comply with these policies.

Our Board of Trustees reviews these policies annually, alongside our compliance with fundraising regulations.



Our privacy policy recognises recent changes and continues to comply with data protection legislation and regulation and is accessible to all on our websites.

We also ensure that we are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

In the year under review, there have been no known formal complaints regarding the organisation's fundraising practices. This is in line with the previous year of 2021–22, in which there were also no complaints.

We echo organisational values in our fundraising practice. Through our close adherence to fundraising regulations, scrutiny by the executive leadership team and transparency with supporters, we ensure that we do not unreasonably intrude on a person's privacy; are not unreasonably persistent; and do not place undue pressure on any person to give money or other property.

We also value difference, continually seek to increase the diversity of our supporters and demonstrate inclusivity in all we do. Our fundraising committees proudly include many autistic and neurodiverse members, alongside those with lived experience.

## Our fundraising work

Most of our fundraised income is generated through partnerships with trusts, foundations and corporate partners, as well as individuals who have an interest in our cause.

We have also benefited from the generosity of community members and individuals participating in online and in-person events and challenges.

We use third parties to support our fundraising when specific digital platforms are required for fundraising events, e.g. JustGiving, Funraising and Givergy.

We do not engage in face-to-face or telephone direct marketing. Our regular giving programme is conducted primarily with our close community. We do not conduct street or public site collections, nor do we have any mass participation activities in place.



# Our people



We are so proud of our people and are committed to making Ambitious about Autism a great place to work. Our colleagues do extraordinary work that transforms the lives of autistic children and young people, and we are passionate about supporting them and developing their potential.

## Equity, diversity and inclusion

We want our organisation to be a place that embraces, enables and champions equity, diversity and inclusion. We want autistic children and young people, our staff, volunteers, supporters and, in fact, anyone who comes into contact with us to feel they belong and can bring their whole professional selves to Ambitious about Autism.

This year we entered the second year of our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and made progress on four key areas of focus:

### Courageous governance and leadership

Following an inclusive recruitment process, our Board of Trustees has a broader range of backgrounds and perspectives. We also appointed an EDI trustee lead, Laura Palmer, to further embed EDI at board level. We recruited a diverse group of autistic young people to our Youth Council, which has high-level oversight of our organisation's work, alongside our Board of Trustees.

### Building an inclusive workplace

This year we continued to develop and grow our three staff networks – safe spaces where people can come together to share ideas, support and learn from one another, raise awareness of challenges and channel their authentic voice.

Our staff networks led lots of cross-organisational activities this year, such as an online event to mark World AIDS Day in December and an internal campaign to drive awareness of the use of gender pronouns. This year we also gathered better data about our staff through our 'Tell us about you' survey.

### High-quality and inclusive education and services

Within our education directorate, our aim across the three years of our EDI strategy is to reach and support diverse communities in a way that is enabling and appropriate to

ambitions, interests, experiences and needs. Each setting has an accessibility policy and, with input from learners and pupils, we've created an easy-read version of our safeguarding policies. Our schools and Ambitious College have built EDI into their curriculum and activities, and we've also set up parent/carers groups across all settings.

### Influencing national work

At a national level we have stood with autistic children and young people from diverse backgrounds nationally. Through our World Autism Acceptance Week 2023 campaign, we championed the voices of autistic young people of colour and LGBTQ+ young people. Working with University College London, we also commissioned research into inequalities in post-diagnostic support for autistic young people.



## Next steps

A lot has been achieved in the first year of our EDI strategy. We have laid good foundations to support our future development in EDI. We now want to focus on embedding these good foundations consistently and strategically progressing the work that will make the most difference to autistic children and young people and our whole community.

## Staff engagement

Listening to our colleagues and gathering their views is key to helping us improve their experiences. A wide-ranging staff survey in October 2022 had a response rate of nearly 90%.

It was really positive to see from the results that colleagues have a strong sense of pride and enjoyment in working for Ambitious about Autism. There's a very high understanding of our vision, mission and values as an organisation, a strong team spirit and a shared drive towards achieving these goals.

Many felt they were treated with fairness and respect and could bring their whole selves to work. Colleagues had trust and respect for their managers and organisational leaders. Results in areas such as safeguarding and safety also scored very highly.

## Communication and engagement

In response to feedback in the staff survey, we strengthened our communication and engagement with colleagues by investing in additional people resource and starting up a printed staff newsletter that was distributed each term across our settings, beginning in spring 2023, as a way of keeping busy staff members up to date with what's happening across the charity.

## Recruitment

Recruitment and retention is a challenge in all industries and continues to be a key priority and focus for us. We introduced a pilot 'Welcome Bonus' programme in February 2023 to help attract and secure critical Allied Health professionals such as occupational and speech and language therapists.

## Hybrid working

Following the pandemic, hybrid working arrangements have been in place for many members of our central teams. In 2022, we carried out a survey to gather staff views about their hybrid working experiences. We were pleased that 97% of staff surveyed felt they were productive and had good support from their manager when working remotely.

## Wellbeing

We continued to provide signposting and support to colleagues through our wellbeing hub on our staff intranet, with tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing. Our popular cross-organisational step challenge also returned this year. The four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

## Ambitious Leaders

We are committed to nurturing and developing talent within our organisation through our learning and development programme, 'Ambitious Leaders'.

The programme was created to support leaders across our organisation and set up in collaboration with staff from across Ambitious about Autism. It has also been accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (InstLM), which means that all participants who successfully complete the programme will become Associate Members of the Institute of Leadership and Management.



# Looking to the year ahead



Over the final year of our Time for Ambition strategy, we will continue to build on our core expertise in education and employability. We will also engage, more than ever before, in other areas essential to autistic children and young people leading fulfilling lives. These include having supportive families and relationships, enjoying good health and wellbeing, and being active citizens in their communities.

We always adapt to make sure we are supporting autistic young people and their families in the right way and at the right time, while always prioritising what matters most to them.



## The cost-of-living crisis

The cost-of-living crisis has had a huge impact on autistic children and young people and their families, who face even more challenging hardships. In 2021–22 and 2022–23, the number of complex welfare cases requiring support from the Learner and Family Services team increased by a third.

We know this demand will only grow and so continue to do all we can to support vulnerable families, often in low-income households, some of whom are facing homelessness. Through all our work, we also want to make sure we are supporting all those who need our help and will be exploring how best to access marginalised communities.



## Reaching more autistic children, young people and their families

Looking ahead, we are excited to be growing our programmes to support more autistic young people and their families than ever before. In particular, we will:

- continue to develop and grow our education services to respond to growing and changing need. This includes supporting our new Spring School into its permanent building and integrating St. John's College into our charity.
- launch the evaluation results for Employ Autism, a unique piece of research and a landmark study in improving autistic young people's employability skills and creating more welcoming and inclusive workplaces; we are also creating a self-sustainable model to expand the reach of critical service
- continue campaigning for better rights and funding in education for autistic children and young people through Written Off?
- expand our ground-breaking assistive technology programme at Ambitious College, which is improving autistic young

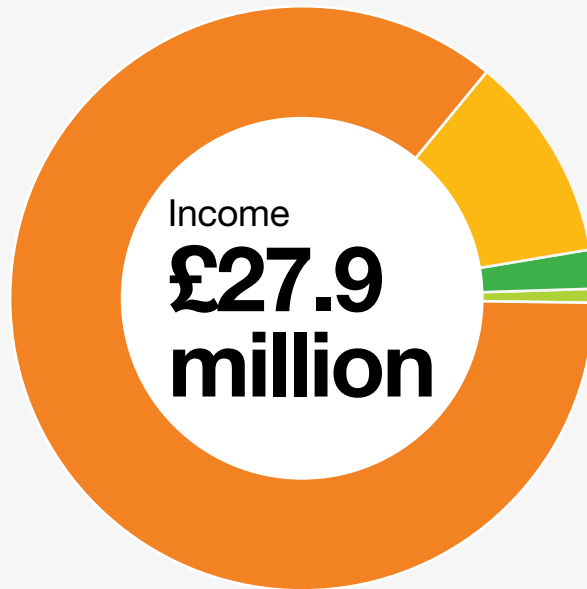


people's access to learning, independence and participation through technology

- continue to grow membership of our accessible online platforms for autistic young people and parents, allowing them to connect with others in similar situations, develop friendships, feel supported and enjoy better wellbeing
- grow our service and resources
- build on the success of new projects, such as our Autistic and OK schools, Employ Autism programme and our post-diagnostic support programme
- shape the next phase in our organisational strategy, Time for Ambition.

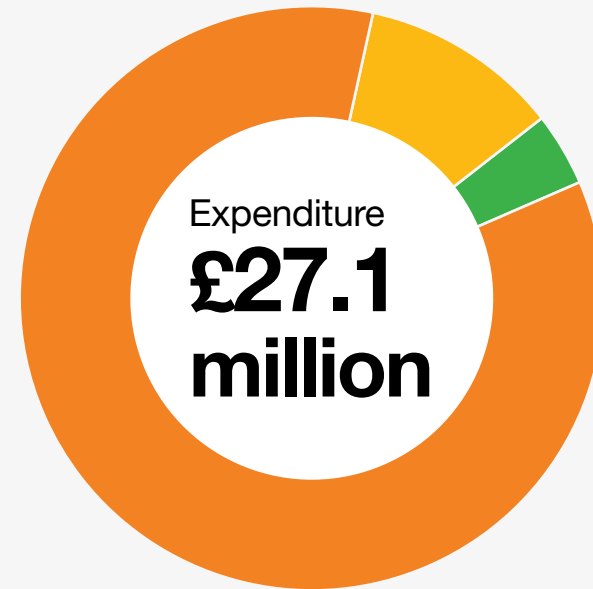
# Financial review

Our total income for the year was £27.9m and our overall expenditure £27.1m. Our net assets are £21.0m, compared with net assets of £20.1m at 31 August 2023.



Income:

- **£23.9m**  
 charitable activities: education services
- **£3.2m**  
 gifts and donated service
- **£0.6m**  
 trading income
- **£0.2m**  
 investments and other income



How our money was spent:

- **£3m**  
 charitable activities: external affairs
- **£23m**  
 charitable activities: education services
- **£1.1m**  
 raising funds



## Financial performance

The 2022–23 year showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £27.9m from £24.5m in 2022, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people. Total expenditure for the year also grew to £27.1m, an increase of £3.7m (2022: £23.4m).

Despite the positive financial performance, free reserves decreased to £2.8m (2022: £2.9m), which is within the reserves target range of £1.7m–£2.8m. These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, as well as providing resilience against financial pressures.

During the year, the charity invested £0.1m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.2m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on vehicles and £0.3m on computer equipment and software.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements with the interest rate fixed at 4% for the NatWest Loan of £1.1m.

Our investment portfolio was valued at £1.7m, a £0.1m reduction compared to 31 August 2022, reflecting challenging market conditions.

## Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2023. It aims to produce the best financial return at an acceptable level of risk. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium. The policy is reviewed at least once a year. The trustees have set a target to grow the portfolio by inflation + 3% per annum (after fees) over the long term. This was not achieved in the year due to market conditions.

The trustees have stated within the investment policy their commitment to responsible investing, and aim to make a positive difference on society through the charity's investment holdings. Over the last three years, investments have increased from £1,644k to £1,693k, which is a gain of 3%.

## Investment risk management

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

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc, which is a reputable FTSE 250 company with net income of £49m in 2022. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk. Risk management practices

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

## Reserves policy and going concern

Free reserves exclude restricted funds and designated funds. At Ambitious about Autism, we hold free reserves to mitigate against risks resulting from unexpected drops in fundraising income, a downturn in learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure. Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2023. Based upon an evaluation of income and expenditure risks and working capital requirements, the trustees have agreed that free reserves should be in the range of £1.8m–£2.8m for 2023–24, based on our risk profile. As at 31 August 2023, free reserves were £2.8m, which are within the free reserves range, £1.7m–£2.8m, for 2022–23. The additional free reserves will be carried forward to the next financial year, when they will be utilised to support core activities as well as the implementation of the Time for Ambition strategy. The 2023–24 budget shows a year end free reserves position that is within the agreed range. The trustees will continue to monitor the reserves position closely throughout the year.

In addition to the free reserves, Ambitious about Autism has a number of designated funds totalling £5.9m as at 31 August 2023. These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £3.7m. Depreciation expenditure will be funded from this fund on an annual basis.
- Buildings maintenance and development fund, which is based on projected 30-year life cycle costs and was established for major repairs to our group and other premises. As at 31 August 2023, there was £0.8m in this fund.
- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. The fund had a balance of £5k as at 31 August 2023.
- Covid recovery fund – a fund established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and support recovery, including additional costs or losses in income.

The fund had a balance of £0.5m as at 31 August 2023.

- Transformation fund – a fund totalling £0.9m at 31 August 2023, which was established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy.

The policy of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is to hold sufficient reserves to provide a working balance to mitigate the impact of uneven cash flows; provide a contingency in respect of unexpected events; and plan for potential major items of expenditure, including continued expansion. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust funds balances as at 31 August 2023 totalled £10.9m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £4.6m of restricted funds and £6.3m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2022 was £9.9m. The pension deficit reported in 2021–22 has swung to a net asset of £31k in 2022–23, resulting in year-on-year unrealised gains, which is at risk of reversing in the future. As this is within the limit of the net asset ceiling, the £31k is recognised in the accounts.

In accordance with the arrangements for a multi-academy trust, any deficit relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is underwritten by the Department for Education.

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

Risks are managed in accordance with the risk policy approved by the Board of Trustees. The aim of the policy is to:

- understand as fully as possible the risks being faced
- take appropriate action to manage those risks
- minimise the risk of new initiatives adversely affecting existing work
- accept a higher level of uncertainty, if appropriate, when taking advantage of new opportunities.

Ambitious about Autism has a risk register, which is reviewed annually by the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Trustees. Risks are scored according to likelihood and impact. The changes to risks are reviewed termly by the Finance and Resources Committee and Board, alongside the actions being taken or proposed to mitigate the risks.

The table on the next page identifies the four key strategic risks that have been identified by the Board of Trustees and explains how these risks are being managed.





### Pupil numbers

## Risk

Within an uncertain policy environment in times of austerity, there is an increased risk to pupil and learner numbers in our education services, and this uncertainty impacts our ability to plan.

## Mitigation

To manage the risk, we monitor pupil and learner numbers so that we can carefully manage admissions and increase our admission numbers as required. We maintain good relationships with commissioners, ensuring timely assessment dates to enable a fast turnaround of consultations, and support parents and carers through the admissions process.



### Recruitment and retention

The failure to recruit and retain the quantity and quality of specialist staff required poses a significant risk to services operating as planned.

High-quality staff are critical to Ambitious about Autism. We are building our recruitment pipeline, diversifying our approach to recruitment and building relationships with training schools to attract applicants in hard-to-recruit professions. We have several initiatives in place to ensure that our terms and conditions are competitive in a challenging market.



### Financial risk

The financial impact of an uncertain economic outlook, and high-cost inflation, may negatively affect the financial position.

Regular management reporting and financial re-forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the group's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.



### Learner related fee income

Fee negotiations with local authorities placing learners could cause cash flow issues and/or have a negative impact on financial sustainability.

Forecasting is undertaken to understand an up-to-date picture of the group's financial outlook and is available to senior management and trustees. Cash flow forecasting is prepared to assess the organisation's ability to meet financial obligations. Reserves balances are maintained to support financial sustainability.

# Legal structures and governance

## Governance

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Ambitious about Autism (the Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 23 May 1997 per Companies House (company number 03375255) and registered as a charity on 2 July 1997 (charity number 1063184). The Company was established under a memorandum of association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

Ambitious about Autism is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the Company for the purposes of company law.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (the Trust) is a multi-academy trust, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. It was founded and incorporated on 18 December 2012 (company number 08335297)

to support the development and running of The Rise School and further free schools. In September 2023 a second free school, Spring School, opened within the Trust.

The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Trust. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who also act as the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, and it has members whose duty is to ensure that the board is effectively discharging its responsibilities. Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of the Trust along with three individual members.

A formal governance review was conducted in 2019 supported by an external facilitator with a focus on streamlining and strengthening governance arrangements across the

group. The board, committee structure and membership, articles of association, members agreements, scheme of reservation and delegation, and terms of references were all updated and are now reviewed annually. All changes in relation to the Trust were approved by the Department for Education.

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are all members of the Joint Group Board Committee. The respective Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust boards retain responsibility for all matters and delegate a number of appropriate decisions to the Joint Group Board Committee and its subcommittees. This maximises efficiency and impact between the two boards. For example, where joint policies exist, they are reviewed and approved, where appropriate,

by the Joint Group Board Committee. Clear schemes of reservation and delegation are in place for both boards.

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

The boards are supported by several joint subcommittees as set out below:

- The Nominations and Remuneration Committee oversees governance planning and policy, including trustee recruitment, support and review. It also reviews and agrees remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Executive Leadership team and staff across the Company and the Trust. It meets termly in advance of board meetings.
- The Finance and Resources Committee meets termly in advance of board meetings and is responsible for the general oversight and scrutiny of systems, planning, financial and resource management, and reviewing internal controls and risk management for the charity and the Trust.

- The Education Committee meets termly and is responsible for oversight of education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and advisory groups in each service for both the charity and the Trust.
- The Investment Committee, an Ambitious about Autism committee, reports to the Finance and Resources Committee, monitoring the performance of the charity's investment portfolio. It meets twice a year.
- The Trust Audit Committee meets termly to oversee the annual report and accounts, the audit, the programme of internal scrutiny and compliance with Department for Education legislation for the Trust.

All matters related to the educational performance of TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College are examined by their governing bodies. This is also the case for the new Spring School since its opening in September 2023. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at every level of our governance.

Management of the charity and the Trust is delegated to the chief executive, who is also the accounting officer for the Trust, and the Executive Leadership team, whose members attend board and subcommittee meetings.

The Ambitious about Autism Youth Council comprised 14 autistic young people aged 16–25 as of 31 August 2023. Members of the Youth Council are encouraged to shape and influence our work and make presentations to the Board of Trustees. Two Youth Council Link Trustees have been appointed to ensure a strong link exists between the board and the Youth Council.

## Trustee recruitment, induction and training

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The aim of the charity and the Trust is to build a diverse board that has the optimum range of skills, experience and perspectives to ensure that we have the appropriate level of support, scrutiny and oversight.



People with lived experience of autism are involved in the governance and decision-making of the charity and the Trust, including on the Board of Trustees, the governing bodies and advisory groups.

The recruitment and induction policy works to promote this goal. New trustees are recruited openly through a variety of channels, including search, advertising and through networks. Once recruited, trustees are supported with an induction programme and handbook in the first few months. As part of the induction process, trustees receive training on issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection.

The charity also runs a termly training programme for trustees, covering topics such as equity, diversity and inclusion, exclusions and unconscious bias.

The recruitment, induction and appraisal of trustees is overseen by the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity or the Trust. Any expenses reclaimed are set out in note 6 to the accounts ([see p84](#)).

## Charity Governance Code

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

Areas of focus in 2022–23 were:

### Equity, diversity and inclusion

The board believes a balance of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds is crucial in the composition of the members to provide a variety of perspectives in discussions and enhance decision-making.

We believe that including people with lived experience of autism in our governance and decision-making and on the Board of Trustees is of benefit to the charity and the Trust.

The board is committed to investing in its diversity. When recruiting new Trustees in the year, the impact on the diversity of the board – with reference to a skills and diversity audit undertaken in July 2022 – was a key consideration. This audit showed a diverse board with a good range and depth

of relevant knowledge and experience, and recruitment of new trustees aims to further enhance this.

### Integrity

The board reviewed the new principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code from December 2020 and confirmed that it was adhering to the new principles. A further review took place post year end.

In particular, the annual review of the safeguarding policies and confirmation of understanding of the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements by trustees as well as regular reviews of the risk register and incidents ensures that the board continually reflects on its responsibilities and those of the organisation.

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

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

Our executive leadership team prioritises achieving the best possible outcomes for our pupils, learners and stakeholders.

Open engagement with parents, guardians and our local communities is vital to building successful and long-term relationships.

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

## S172 statement

The Board have identified the following key stakeholders based on the nature of their interactions with the charity and with reference to the charitable objectives:

- The autistic children and young people who attend education settings run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers.
- The autistic young people who access the national programmes of activities run by Ambitious about Autism, and their parents and carers.

- Funders, supporters and partners of Ambitious about Autism's national programmes of activities.
- Current and potential employers of autistic young people.
- Professionals working in the field of autism education.
- Ambitious about Autism employees.
- Suppliers and contractors.

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

The executive leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term. This includes a regular review of our risk register, departmental operational plans and overall strategic plan.
- The interests of our employees, through regular feedback from all-staff meetings, team meetings and individual monthly supervisions.

- The need to foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others, ranging from prompt supplier payments to regular meetings and communication with local authorities. This includes weekly updates to local authorities with respect to our pupils and learners.
- The impact of the operations of the charity and the Trust on the community and the environment. We have a community representative on all our governing bodies and continue to review our fleet management to achieve further cost savings in terms of running costs and our impact on the environment.
- The desirability of the charity and the Trust in maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct. We lead by example and build a culture of excellence through good recruitment choices and practices, and excellent training.
- The need to act fairly as members of the charity and the Trust. We have combined most of our policies across the group.
- Board oversight and challenge – the Board of Trustees receive regular updates on stakeholder engagement at their termly meetings through the management reporting pack developed by the senior

management team. For example, recent/planned engagement moments with employees are outlined in the termly and annual 'People' report and KPIs, and recent/planned engagement moments with funders are outlined in the termly and annual Fundraising reports. The Board engages directly with autistic young people through the Youth Council, who are represented at Board meetings either in person or through pre-recorded messages. The Trustees are encouraged to question and challenge the senior management team to ensure the input of key stakeholders is taken into account when developing organisational strategy.

- Board training – the Board of Trustees receive regular training on a range of subjects, including compliance matters related to safeguarding and governance, and on topics more widely related to the areas in which the charity operate. Bi-annual seminars are held to focus on areas of current interest for the Trustees, including topics relevant to stakeholder engagement. Trustees are also regularly invited to attend events with external stakeholders, and to visit the educational settings, in order to gain a firsthand insight into the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups.

Within the 2022–23 year a key engagement activity with the staff of the Charity and the Trust was through an organisation-wide staff survey. This sought the views of colleagues on a range of topics, to understand their experience of working for Ambitious about Autism and to identify areas of improvement for future focus ([see page 40](#)). The findings from the survey were explored in detail by the Senior Management Team, the Staff Council and the Senior Leadership Teams of each of the education settings. Results were also shared with and discussed in depth by the Trustees.

During the year our Service Development team met with a number of key external stakeholders including the Department for Education and a range of local authorities, to explore options for the further growth and development of the organisation. There was also a high level of engagement with key government policymakers ([see page 11](#)).

The Youth Council is an important group of volunteers, providing a link between the Board of Trustees and autistic young people to ensure their voice is heard and reflected at a strategic level. [See page 23](#) for more information about the Youth Council's activities during 2022–23.

## Remuneration policy for key management personnel

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The Board of Trustees of Ambitious about Autism and the Trust is responsible for defining the executive pay policy. This includes deciding on the salaries of the chief executive and the executive leadership team. The board delegates this responsibility to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The committee reviews executive pay and our total reward strategy for staff.

The committee meets each term and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. We have an executive pay policy that sets out our approach to pay for our Executive Leadership team, how pay is determined and reviewed, and the relative impact on pay across the organisation.

Our approach to pay is underpinned by our principle to:

“Pay a fair salary and reward package to attract and retain skilled and expert senior leaders for Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Salaries and benefits should be competitive within the charity, education and public



sectors, proportionate to the complexity of each role and responsibility, and in line with our objectives and affordable.”

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

- Take account of pay in similar organisations in the UK charity and public sector markets, but do not compete with salaries in the private sector.
- Monitor salary trends in the charity sector through surveys produced by providers such as XperTHR, Croner and ACEVO, as well as Education and Skills Funding Agency academy schools financial benchmarking reports and, where necessary, commission external benchmarking exercises.
- Ensure performance is reviewed and reported to the Nominations and Remuneration Committee on an annual basis. Apply performance-related pay elements only where required by the relevant market sector.
- Mirror the national standards for professional groups, such as headteachers.
- Take account of the Academy Trust Handbook.

- Take account of the difference between Executive Leadership team pay and the lowest-paid roles, and median and average pay across the organisation.

## Our approach to safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility within the charity and the Trust. This means our trustees, employees and volunteers are required to ensure that Ambitious about Autism is a safe space.

Our policy and procedures also apply to extended and off-site activities, managed by the charity and the Trust, such as community access programmes, residential visits and work experience placements.

All staff members undertake safeguarding and adult protection training during induction, including whistleblowing procedures, to ensure they understand our safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

This training is regularly updated, at least annually, and is in line with advice from our local safeguarding adult partnership, Haringey Safeguarding Adults. All staff receive training

on the government’s anti-radicalisation strategy, PREVENT, to enable them to identify young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff also receive regular safeguarding and adult protection updates (for example, through emails, newsletters, and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

All trustees and governors receive annual training about safeguarding, to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their strategic responsibilities as outlined in part 2 of the Department for Education’s statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (KCSiE).

Safeguarding is embedded in our recruitment processes, with at least one person on any interview/appointment panel for a post at the charity or the Trust required to have completed Safer Recruitment in Education training.

All staff who have contact with young people and families have regular supervisions, and access to external clinical supervisions. These provide staff with support, coaching,

and training, promote the interests of young people and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

## Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

SECR is a legislative reporting requirement commenced on 1 April 2019. It mandates that all companies that meet the thresholds must report on their operational energy consumption and associated emissions. The high-level breakdown is as follows:

		kWh	Mileage	tCO2e
Gas	2022-23	402,764	n/a	74
	2021-22	407,071	n/a	75
Electricity	2022-23	503,858	n/a	104
	2021-22	715,755	n/a	139
Transport	2022-23	24,427	25,461	6
	2021-22	20,624	21,192	5
Total	2022-23	931,049	25,461	184
	2021-22	1,143,450	21,192	219

## Intensity metric

An intensity metric gives us an indicator of carbon performance based on an operational figure of the number of service users (pupils and learners), with 324 users emitting on average 0.57kg CO2e each. This is measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2022-23	2021-22
Number of service users	324	312
tCO2e	184	219
	0.57	0.70

## Sustainability action plan

At Ambitious about Autism, we understand the important role that we play in responding to climate change. We are committed to reducing our carbon emissions and have already made excellent progress on our sustainability action plan. Through our three-year strategy, we are raising better awareness, reshaping our activities and developing solutions to ensure that our organisation is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Our achievements in 2022–23 include:

- The purchase of new electric fleet vehicles, which are now in place at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College’s West Thames campus and St. John’s College in Brighton.
- Installation of electric vehicle charging points at TreeHouse School, Ambitious College’s West Thames campus and St. John’s College to support the new electric fleet and to encourage the use of greener transport.
- Dual waste and recycling facilities are now in place at all settings, resulting in a reduction of general waste and disposal cost.
- New electricity supply contracts have been secured for TreeHouse School and The Rise School, which provide 100% green renewable energy to our settings.
- LED lighting upgrades have been completed at Ambitious College’s West Thames campus and the Pears National Centre for Autism Education.
- Development of a new environmental awareness eLearning course, which is available through our Ambitious Learning platform.

- A Sustainability Committee has been established to gather views on sustainability from a wide range of stakeholders and is responsible for monitoring the strategy and action plan.
- Completion of a feasibility study and exploration of options for renewable energy generation via solar photovoltaic panels at the Pears National Centre for Autism Education.
- The establishment of a carbon footprint, working with our external partner Acclaro Consulting, has allowed us to produce a carbon reduction strategy for the next three years.

We are really proud of our journey so far and, despite the economic challenges, there have been some substantive and impactful achievements. As we move into the third year of our strategy, we will continue to review and further develop our plans, whilst also exploring new opportunities that contribute to a sustainable future.

The following figures were used to convert energy (kWh) to tCO<sub>2</sub>e figures:

	Litre		CO <sub>2</sub> e	
	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
<b>Gas</b>	n/a	n/a	0.18293 tonnes per MWh	0.18254 tonnes per MWh
<b>Electricity</b>	n/a	n/a	0.2071 tonnes per MWh	0.19338 tonnes per MWh
<b>Fuel</b>	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 10.6kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22166 tonnes per MWh	Petrol: 0.22719 tonnes per MWh
	Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Diesel: 9.5kWh per litre	Diesel: 0.23908 tonnes per MWh	Diesel: 0.24115 tonnes per MWh

## Keeping data safe

We are fully committed to protecting the details of all the people we work with and who support us. We continue to make sure we're always thinking about privacy and how to keep data safe and secure. Staff are required to stay up to date and informed through regular training. We never stop working on this.

## Public benefit

Ambitious about Autism works to support autistic children and young people and their families throughout the UK. TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19, The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–18 and Ambitious College supports learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements of learners are funded by a combination of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and local authorities. Other activities are funded through voluntary income or fees earned from providing a service, for example, providing specialist training or support to parents, teachers and other professionals.

In overseeing the provision of education and the support of children, young people and their families, the trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have complied with their duty regarding the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.



The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning its future activities.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's principal object is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the UK by developing schools to make special educational provisions for pupils with special educational needs, or 16–19 academies offering curricula appropriate to the needs of their students.

The Trust opened its first school, The Rise School, in September 2014. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

## Connected organisations

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Ambitious about Autism is an active member of the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, Positive Behaviour Support Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium.

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

## Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

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The Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is a separate exempt charity.

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

The Trust is actively seeking further partnerships to develop more special schools to address a growing need for more specialist education provision for autistic children and young people.

# Trustees, advisers and senior staff

## Our leadership team and advisers

The trustees of Ambitious about Autism are directors and members of the charitable company. They each guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up.

The total number of such guarantees on 31 August 2023 was six. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

## Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

### Neil Goulden

(Chair)

### Lesley Longstone

(Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Education Committee, resigned 21 July 2023)

### Michael Clark

(Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, appointed 21 July 2023)

### Elizabeth Stanton

(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee, resigned 1 September 2023)

### Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia

(Treasurer, Chair of the the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee, appointed 21 July 2023)

### Andy Forbes

(Chair of the Education Committee, appointed July 2023)

### Jack Welch

### Anna Thatcher

(appointed 1 September 2023)

### Ian Caplan

(appointed 8 December 2023)

## Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

### Neil Goulden

(Chair)

### Lesley Longstone

(Vice Chair, resigned 21 July 2023)

### Michael Clark

(Vice Chair, appointed 21 July 2023)

### Elizabeth Stanton

(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, resigned 1 September 2023)

### Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia

(Treasurer and Chair of the the Finance and Resources Committee, appointed 21 July 2023)

### Joanna Healey

### Lucy Nutt

### Laura Palmer

### Kumar Tangri

(resigned as a Trustee on 24 March 2023)

### Helen Jeffries

(appointed 9 December 2022)

### Mark O'Kelly

(Chair of the Trust Audit Committee, appointed 2 June 2023)

### Mary Fawcett

(appointed 1 September 2023)

### Angela Buxton

(appointed 8 December 2023)

## Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

### Ambitious about Autism

### Martyn Craddock

### Andy Forbes

### Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia

(resigned 21 July 2023)

### Jack Welch

(appointed 21 July 2023)

The trustees are supported in their work by the president and vice presidents, who all support the work of our charity.

## President

### The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE

## Vice presidents

### Nick Baldwin CBE

### Virginia Bovell CBE

### Peter Carroll

### John Constantine

### Katharine Doré OBE

### Karen Edwards OBE

### Tristia Harrison

### Alex Hatter

### Richard Hatter

### Nick Hornby

### Bruno Paulson

### Sir Trevor Pears CMG

### Matthew Punshon

### Charlotte Warner

### Sid Wells



## Expert advisers

Our team of expert advisers are leading academics, clinicians, lawyers and communications professionals, all with an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. They provide advice and guidance on specific projects and campaigns, all as volunteers. We are honoured to be able to draw on the expertise of:

**Judith Barnard**

**Steve Broach**

**Leo Capella**

**Prof Tony Charman**

**Prof Richard Hastings**

**Prof Patricia Howlin**

**Jonathan Meth**

**Dr Emran Mian OBE**

**David Nicholson**

**Nick Peacey**

**Mark Schmid**

**Dr Rowie Shaw OBE**

**Fiona Slomovic**

**Su Thomas**

**Richard Townley**

**Gaby Zein**

## Ambassadors

Our ambassadors come from all walks of life, but all share an interest in autism and a passion to raise awareness and understanding. Our ambassadors are:

**Gregg Wallace**

**Niamh Cusack**

**Kathy Lette**

**David Mitchell**

**Sam Holness**

**Lucy Mottram**

**Simon Mottram**

**Jules Robertson**

**Hayley Ronson**

**Jon Snow**

**Luke Treadaway**

## Parent patrons

Our team of parent patrons are all people whose lives have been touched by autism:

**Nicky Clark**

**Clare Coombe-Tennant**

**John Coombe-Tennant**

**Matt Davis**

**Eliza Mishcon**

**Keith Duffy**

**Charlotte Moore**

**Claire Ryan**

**Sophie Walker**

## Employ Autism development board

**The Lord Tim Clement Jones CBE**  
(Chair)

**Laurie Edmans CBE**

**Chris Pond**

**Tristia Harrison**

**Alistair MacCallum**

**Koral Anderson**

**Sue Adkins**

**Matt Hutnell**

**Katie Vanneck-Smith**

**Danuta Gray**

**Sally Cairns**

**Nick Medd**

## Business ambassador group

**Simon Clements**  
(Chair)

**Jean Lavenant**

**Tim Barber**

**Matt Davis**

**Marilyn Swinney**

**Jim Berrisford**

**Mark Edwards**

**Ruth Kennedy**

**Nathan Ott**

**Dom Hilleard**

**Neil Patel**

**Harriet Forrest**

**Ian Iceton**

**Paul Cunningham**

**Magnus Schoeman**

**Nick Medd**

**Andrew Mercer**

**Dan Snape**

**Richard Jones**

**Nigel Moralee**

**Gina Connell**

**Tracey Dawes**

**Tom Marchant**

**Steven Ingram**

**Gina Connell**

**Jack Biddulph**

**Joanne Smith**

**Michael Korn**

**Pia Wilkes**

**Rob Ford**

## Executive leadership team

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

### Jolanta Lasota

Chief Executive

### Vivienne Berkeley

Director of Education

### Paul Breckell

Deputy Chief Executive

### Louise Honeysett

Director of Finance and Planning,  
and Company Secretary

### Danae Leaman-Hill

Director of Fundraising and Development  
(resigned 28 October 2022), Director of  
External Affairs and Development  
(appointed 31 October 2022)

### Zoe Weaver

Director of People (resigned 12 May 2023)

### Kate Jenkins

Interim Director of People and Culture (appointed  
24 April 2023, resigned 28 September 2023)

### Mark Ospedale

Director of People and Culture  
(appointed 18 September 2023)

### Alison Worsley

Director of External Affairs  
(resigned 21 October 2022)

### Claire Thomson

Interim Director of National Services  
(appointed 31 October 2022)

### Michael Michaelides

Director of Property and IT  
(appointed 2 October 2023)

## Independent auditor

### RSM UK Audit LLP

25 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB

## Bankers

### National Westminster Bank Plc

13 Market Place, Reading RG1 2EP

### Nationwide Building Society, Nationwide House

Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW

### CAF Bank Limited

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

## Solicitors

### Stone King LLP

13 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HJ

### Farrer & Co LLP

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

## Investment managers

### Rathbone Brothers Public Limited Company

8 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7AZ



# The statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also directors of Ambitious about Autism for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report, including the strategic report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and group as at the balance sheet date, and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
  - observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
  - make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
  - state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

## Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

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In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

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

corporate and financial information on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by order of the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report required by company law (included therein) are approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as the directors at a meeting on 22 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

**Neil Goulden**

Chair of the Board of Trustees



# Independent auditor's report to the members of Ambitious about Autism

## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious about Autism (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2023 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account, the Group and Company Balance Sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard

applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2023 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial

statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.



## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report or the Strategic Report included within the Trustees'/Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or

- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on **page 65**, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

## The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with

laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework that the group and parent charitable company operates in and how the group and parent charitable company are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur, including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, the parent charitable company's

governing document, tax legislation and Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report, remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents, inspecting correspondence with tax authorities and evaluating advice received from internal/ external advisors.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to the Keeping Children Safe in Education under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgments and estimates.

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

## Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work

has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*HCatchpool*

**Hannah Catchpool**

Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of

**RSM UK AUDIT LLP**

Statutory Auditor

Chartered Accountants

25 Farringdon Street

London

EC4A 4AB

Date: 26 March 2024

## Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	For the year ended 31 August 2023						For the year ended 31 August 2022
		Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000	Total £'000
Income from:							
Donations and legacies:							
Gifts and donated services	2	1,486	1,583	3,069	108	3,177	2,094
Charitable activities:							
Educational services	3	16,709	516	17,225	6,606	23,831	21,788
External affairs	3	-	63	63	-	63	29
Other income							
Trading income		540	41	581	24	605	393
Investment income		204	-	204	-	204	169
Total income		18,939	2,203	21,142	6,738	27,880	24,473
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds							
Fundraising activities		1,062	-	1,062	-	1,062	750
Investment management costs		12	-	12	-	12	13
		1,074	-	1,074	-	1,074	763
Charitable activities:							
Educational services		17,276	669	17,945	5,109	23,054	20,678
External affairs		2,016	954	2,970	-	2,970	1,982
Total expenditure	4	20,366	1,623	21,989	5,109	27,098	23,423
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		(1,427)	580	(847)	1,629	782	1,050
Net (losses) on investments		(137)	-	(137)	-	(137)	(159)
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	311	311	2,814
Net (expenditure)/income		(1,564)	580	(984)	1,940	956	3,705
Transfers between funds	19	1,106	(196)	910	(910)	-	-
Net movement in funds		(458)	384	(74)	1,030	956	3,705
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward	19	9,124	1,086	10,210	9,862	20,072	16,367
Total funds carried forward	19	8,666	1,470	10,136	10,892	21,028	20,072



## Balance sheets

### As at 31 August 2023

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
<b>Fixed assets:</b>					
Tangible assets	10	16,181	16,399	10,079	10,267
Intangible assets	11	116	123	109	113
Investments	12	1,693	1,762	1,693	1,762
		17,990	18,284	11,881	12,142
<b>Current assets:</b>					
Debtors	13	8,646	1,213	6,340	1,145
Cash at bank and in hand		5,696	9,248	1,809	4,687
Short-term deposits		2,013	13	1,008	8
		16,355	10,474	9,157	5,840
<b>Liabilities:</b>					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14, 15	(9,191)	(3,712)	(6,745)	(3,082)
<b>Net current assets</b>		7,164	6,762	2,412	2,758
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		25,154	25,046	14,293	14,900
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	(4,157)	(4,690)	(4,157)	(4,690)
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/(liability)	17	31	(284)	-	-
<b>Total net assets</b>	18	21,028	20,072	10,136	10,210

## Balance sheets (continued)

### As at 31 August 2023

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
<b>Funds</b>					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		1,470	1,086	1,470	1,086
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		10,892	9,862	-	-
<b>Total restricted funds</b>		<b>12,362</b>	<b>10,948</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>1,086</b>
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		5,890	6,261	5,890	6,261
General funds		2,776	2,863	2,776	2,863
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>		<b>8,666</b>	<b>9,124</b>	<b>8,666</b>	<b>9,124</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21,028</b>	<b>20,072</b>	<b>10,136</b>	<b>10,210</b>

The financial statements on pages 72 to 76 were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 22 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by

#### Neil Goulden

Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 77 to 106 form an integral part of these financial statements.

## Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2023

		For the year ended 31 August 2023		For the year ended 31 August 2022	
	Note	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>					
Net cash provided by operating activities	20		(219)		2,051
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>					
Dividends and interest from investments		204		103	
Interest payable		(235)		(120)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		(696)		(698)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		6		-	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		482		352	
Change on cash held for investment		(12)		(45)	
Purchase of investments		(538)		(350)	
<b>Net cash (used in) investing activities</b>			(789)		(758)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>					
Repayments of borrowing		(544)		(723)	
<b>Net cash (used in) financing activities</b>			(544)		(723)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents</b>			(1,552)		570
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			9,261		8,691
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>			7,709		9,261
<b>Cash and cash equivalents consists of:</b>					
Cash at bank and in hand			5,696		9,248
Short-term deposits			2,013		13
			7,709		9,261

## Consolidated statement of cash flows (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2023

Net debt reconciliation	At the start of the year	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash	9,248	(3,552)	-	5,696
Cash equivalents	13	2,000	-	2,013
Loans falling due within one year	(424)	424	(391)	(391)
Loans falling due after more than one year	(4,616)	117	391	(4,108)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,221</b>	<b>(1,011)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,210</b>



# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 1. Accounting policies

Ambitious about Autism is a charitable group limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office address is Woodside Avenue, London, N10 3JA.

#### a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (March 2018) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are presented in Sterling (£) which is also the functional currency of the group.

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

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

#### b. Basis of consolidation

Ambitious about Autism is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. Therefore the consolidated financial statements of the charity incorporate the financial statements of the trust, a UK company limited by guarantee (company registration number 8335297) that is also an exempt charity. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust's results and net assets at 31 August 2023 are consolidated within these accounts on a line by line basis. Intercompany transactions and balances between charitable companies are eliminated. Consistent accounting policies have been adopted across the group.

#### c. Public benefit entity

The charitable company meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

#### d. Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. A 12-month detailed budget is prepared from year-end

as well as a higher level five-year finance model. The trustees have a reasonable expectation that Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust has available cash to settle liabilities as they fall due and has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

A Covid fund of £0.6m was established in 2020 to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income. The financial forecast and assumptions for the financial year 2022-23 have taken into account some of the macro economic factors including the higher inflationary environment.

The Trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for a period of at least 12 months from sign off.

#### e. Income

Income is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the group has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred. Fees are recognised as services are rendered, deferring until criteria are met.

School and college fee income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

#### f. Donations of gifts, services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the group has control over the item or received the service, any conditions associated with the donation have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the group of the item is probable and that the economic benefit can be measured reliably.

On receipt, donated gifts, professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the group, which is the amount the group would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in the expenditure in the period of receipt.

#### g. Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the group; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

#### h. Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

#### i. Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services and other educational activities undertaken to further the purposes of the group, and their associated support costs.

Ambitious about Autism is VAT registered. As the charity provides a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies, VAT on expenditure that cannot be directly attributed to either type of supply is partially recovered.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### j. Allocation of support costs

Resources are expended and allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned on the following bases which are estimates, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

Central function	Main basis for allocation
Leadership	Time spent
Finance	Staff head count
Human resources	Staff head count
IT	Staff head count
Facilities management	Area occupied
General administration	Staff head count
Premises and office costs	Area occupied

Where information about the aims, objectives and projects of the group is provided to potential beneficiaries, the costs associated with this are allocated to charitable expenditure.

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the group. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the group's activities.

The management charge for the Ambitious about Autism support provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is eliminated on consolidation of the group accounts.

### k. Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

### l. Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment or groups of items are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £5,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset except freehold land to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The useful lives are as follows:

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

### m. Intangible fixed assets

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

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

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

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

Software development costs	3 years
----------------------------	---------

### n. Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading 'Net gains/(losses) on investments' in the statement of financial activities.

### o. Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

### p. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

### q. Short-term deposits

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

### r. Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the group has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

### s. Financial instruments

The group has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 in full to all of its financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value. Other financial instruments are recognised at fair value with the change in fair value recognised as a gain or loss in the statement of financial activities.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered into and are subsequently re-measured to fair value, at each reporting date. Fair value gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss. This has been recognised as expenditure under finance costs.

Borrowings are initially recognised at the transaction price, including transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Interest expense is recognised on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in interest payable and other similar expenses.

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

A financial asset is derecognised only when the contractual rights to cash flows expire or are settled, or substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to another party, or if some (but not substantially all) risks and rewards of ownership are retained but control of the asset has transferred to another party that is able to sell the asset in its entirety to an unrelated third party. A financial liability (or part thereof) is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expires.

### t. Pensions

Ambitious about Autism has a defined contribution pension scheme available to all staff.

On 1 July 2014, and in compliance with Government legislation on Auto Enrolment, a defined contribution group personal pension scheme was opened. Employees were able to join on inception or under the rules of auto enrolment with a deferred period of three months.

Ambitious about Autism also contributes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The pension available to teaching staff is a defined benefit, multi employer scheme and the assets and liabilities of the scheme cannot be split out for individual employers. Further information is given in note 17.

The pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by the group in the year to all pension schemes.

Retirement benefits to employees of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient

information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in separate trustee-administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

### u. Redundancy payments

Redundancy payments are accounted for in the period in which they become an obligation on the charity and/or group.

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

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

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

### Key sources of estimation uncertainty

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

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

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 2. Income from donations and legacies

##### For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	1,144	1,583	2,727	108	2,835
Donated services	342	-	342	-	342
	<b>1,486</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>3,069</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>3,177</b>

##### For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	403	1,545	1,948	96	2,044
Donated services	50	-	50	-	50
	<b>453</b>	<b>1,545</b>	<b>1,998</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>2,094</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 3. Income from charitable activities

##### For the year ended 31 August 2023

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Local authorities	14,197	-	14,197	4,560	18,757
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,512	516	3,028	2,046	5,074
<b>Sub-total for educational services</b>	<b>16,709</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>17,225</b>	<b>6,606</b>	<b>23,831</b>
Autism Education Trust	-	63	63	-	63
<b>Sub-total for external affairs</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Total income from charitable activities</b>	<b>16,709</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>17,288</b>	<b>6,606</b>	<b>23,894</b>

##### For the year ended 31 August 2022

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Local authorities	13,685	-	13,685	4,208	17,893
Education Skills Funding Agency	2,229	189	2,418	1,477	3,895
<b>Sub-total for educational services</b>	<b>15,914</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>16,103</b>	<b>5,685</b>	<b>21,788</b>
Autism Education Trust	-	29	29	-	29
<b>Sub-total for external affairs</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Total income from charitable activities</b>	<b>15,914</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>16,132</b>	<b>5,685</b>	<b>21,817</b>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 4. Analysis of expenditure

	Staff costs (note 6) £'000	Direct costs £'000	Finance (incl loan interest) £'000	Human resources £'000	Information technology £'000	Premises and office costs £'000	Leadership £'000	Support costs £'000	Governance costs £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	522	430	-	-	-	13	-	84	12	1,061
Educational services	10,820	1,157	-	-	31	758	-	4,748	442	17,956
External affairs	1,534	888	-	-	-	103	-	395	50	2,970
<b>Ambitious about Autism</b>	<b>12,876</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,227</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>21,987</b>
Support costs	2,147	520	825	795	132	738	70	(5,227)	-	-
Governance costs	405	69	-	-	-	-	30	-	(504)	-
<b>Allocated costs</b>	<b>2,552</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>(5,227)</b>	<b>(504)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism sub-total</b>	<b>15,428</b>	<b>3,064</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>21,987</b>
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	3,699	840	-	-	-	570	-	-	-	5,109
<b>Total expenditure 2023</b>	<b>19,127</b>	<b>3,904</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>2,182</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>27,096</b>

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity, comprising the salary and the overhead costs of the central function, is apportioned based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity.

All Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust support costs are paid through management fees, which are eliminated on consolidation, any other costs are allocated directly to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Depreciation	847	864
Amortisation	54	49
Derivative Liability	-	-
Interest payable	235	120
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	58	25
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	23	19
Ambitious about Autism Teachers Pension audit	1	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Annual accounts return	2	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers Pension audit	1	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	3	2
Ambitious about Autism other services	5	4
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	137	102
Equipment	22	8

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 6. Analysis of group staff costs, Trustee remuneration and expenses, and the costs of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
Salaries and wages	16,137	14,035
Social security costs	1,605	1,402
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	1,029	1,586
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	350	315
	<b>19,121</b>	<b>17,338</b>

The 2023 figures for Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust include all costs of the defined benefit pension scheme in pension costs, not just employer contributions.

Redundancy and termination costs (including payment in lieu of notice) of £86k were paid in the year (2022: £21k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2023, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2022 £'000
£60,000-£69,999	11	5
£70,000-£79,999	6	4
£80,000-£89,999	3	3
£90,000-£99,999	3	1
£100,000-£109,999	0	1
£110,000-£119,999	2	1
£120,000-£129,999	0	1
£130,000-£139,999	1	0

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £915k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2023 (2022: £831k).

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious About Autism, was paid an annual salary of £119k to 31 August 2023 (2022: £119k).

The charity Trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2022: £nil). No charity Trustee received any payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2022: £nil).

A Trustee made an expense claim of £499 for accommodation costs in 2023 (2022: £nil).



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 7. Staff numbers

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

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No
Raising funds	7	8
Educational services	405	374
External affairs	37	26
Support	64	53
	<b>513</b>	<b>461</b>

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

The full time equivalent of staff employed during the year was as follows:

	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No	For the year ended 31 August 2022 No
Raising funds	7	8
Educational services	372	341
External affairs	34	25
Support	58	49
	<b>471</b>	<b>423</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 8. Related party transactions

During the year 5 trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have a significant control a total of £18,488 (2022: £789 donated by 6 trustees). Of these, no gifts (2022: nil) were restricted donations.

Paul Breckell is an unpaid trustee of NCVO and NCVO Trading Ltd. Ambitious about Autism has booked rooms at The Society Building which is run by NCVO (via NCVO Trading Limited). During the year payments to NCVO were £5,384 (2022: £19,224). At the year end, there was a £316 creditor balance with NCVO (2022: £265). Services were provided to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust at a cost of £910k from September 2022 to August 2023 (2022: £697k). These services include Finance, Education, HR, Communications, Facilities and IT support. These are provided at cost and would otherwise need to be procured commercially. The increase is due to the growth in the Spring School. At year end £194k (2022: £238k) was reported under amounts owed by group undertakings (debtors).

#### 9. Taxation

The group is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

## Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 10. Tangible fixed assets

Group	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Long leasehold £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>							
At the start of the year	11,923	6,727	1,738	1,307	1,256	218	23,169
Additions	63	-	-	212	270	104	649
Disposals	(20)	-	-	-	-	(53)	(73)
At the end of the year	11,966	6,727	1,738	1,519	1,526	269	23,745
<b>Depreciation</b>							
At the start of the year	3,291	851	929	570	988	141	6,770
Charge	241	142	183	98	158	25	847
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	(53)	(53)
At the end of the year	3,532	993	1,112	668	1,146	113	7,564
<b>Net book value</b>	8,434	5,734	626	851	380	156	16,181
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>8,434</b>	<b>5,734</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>16,181</b>
<b>At the start of the year</b>	<b>8,632</b>	<b>5,876</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>16,399</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 10. Tangible fixed assets (continued)

Ambitious about Autism	Freehold land and buildings £'000	Leasehold improvements £'000	Educational, office furniture and equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>						
At the start of the year	11,923	1,590	1,158	975	218	15,864
Additions	63	-	99	169	104	435
Disposals	(20)	-	-	-	(53)	(73)
At the end of the year	11,966	1,590	1,257	1,144	269	16,226
<b>Depreciation</b>						
At the start of the year	3,291	884	452	829	141	5,597
Charge	241	168	78	91	25	603
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(53)	(53)
At the end of the year	3,532	1,052	530	920	113	6,147
<b>Net book value</b>	8,434	538	727	224	156	10,079
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>8,434</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>10,079</b>
<b>At the start of the year</b>	<b>8,632</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>10,267</b>

Land (AaA) with a cost of £834,000 (2022: £834,000) is included within freehold property and is not depreciated. The long leasehold (125 years) refers to The Rise School building.

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>			
At the start of the period	219	8	<b>227</b>
Additions in the period	37	10	<b>47</b>
At the end of the period	256	18	<b>274</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At the start of the period	104	-	<b>104</b>
Charge for the period	54	-	<b>54</b>
At the end of the period	158	-	<b>158</b>
<b>Net book value</b>	98	18	<b>116</b>
<b>At the end of the period</b>	98	18	<b>116</b>
<b>At the start of the period</b>	115	8	<b>123</b>

Amortisation charge is reflected in the SOFA.

Ambitious about Autism	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>			
At the start of the period	209	8	<b>217</b>
Additions in the period	37	10	<b>47</b>
At the end of the period	246	18	<b>264</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At the start of the period	104	-	<b>104</b>
Charge for the period	51	-	<b>51</b>
At the end of the period	155	-	<b>155</b>
<b>Net book value</b>	91	18	<b>109</b>
<b>At the end of the period</b>	91	18	<b>109</b>
<b>At the start of the period</b>	105	8	<b>113</b>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	1,689	1,850
Additions at cost	538	350
Disposal proceeds	(482)	(352)
Net (loss) on change in fair value	(137)	(159)
Market value at the end of the year	1,608	1,689
Cash held in investments	85	73
<b>Total investments held</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>1,762</b>

Investments comprise	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
<b>Listed securities</b>		
Fixed interest	281	183
Direct UK equities	553	607
Direct overseas equities	530	628
Alternatives - property and managed funds	244	271
Cash held for re-investment	79	65
Cash	6	8
<b>Market value at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>1,762</b>

The historical cost of investments is £1,652k (2022: £1,575k).

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 13. Debtors

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Trade debtors	7,346	352	5,315	320
Amounts owed by group undertakings	-	-	194	238
Other debtors	381	287	87	34
Prepayments	607	276	432	255
Accrued income	312	298	312	298
	<b>8,646</b>	<b>1,213</b>	<b>6,340</b>	<b>1,145</b>

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

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Bank loans	391	424	391	424
Amounts owed to group undertakings	-	-	-	-
Trade creditors	506	344	391	162
Taxation and social security	481	385	389	325
Other creditors	189	55	111	53
Accruals	683	902	487	717
Deferred income (note 15)	6,941	1,602	4,976	1,401
	<b>9,191</b>	<b>3,712</b>	<b>6,745</b>	<b>3,082</b>

#### 15. Deferred income

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	1,602	1,762	1,401	1,169
Amount released to income in the year	(1,602)	(1,762)	(1,401)	(1,169)
Amount deferred in the year	6,941	1,602	4,976	1,401
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>6,941</b>	<b>1,602</b>	<b>4,976</b>	<b>1,401</b>

Deferred income as at 31 August 2023 relates to autumn 2023 term fees that were invoiced in advance of the new academic year.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

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

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2022 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	3,102	3,515
Loan to finance Ambitious College	1,006	1,101
Derivative Liability	49	74
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>4,157</b>	<b>4,690</b>

The charity has a loan from Futurebuilders which commenced in October 2008 and is repayable over 25 years.

Interest is chargeable at 1.25% above the BoE base rate. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

The charity also has a loan from NatWest, in tranches of £1.1m and £1.9m, which commenced in November 2008 and April 2012 respectively. Interest is chargeable at 0.75% above LIBOR and 1.25% above LIBOR respectively until 31st January 2022. From 1st February 2022, both loans are moved to the SONIA rate. One tranche of the loan (£1.1m) is capped at an interest rate of 4%. The loan is repayable from November 2013 over 22 years. The loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue.

Two new loans were acquired in August 2020, £500k from Rathbones and the other £500k from NatWest with both loans charging interest of 2.5% over base rate. The NatWest loan is repayable over 20 years and the Rathbones loan is repayable in 5 years.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £13k recognised in the year.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	229	1,079	892
NatWest £1.1m tranche	54	245	401
NatWest £1.9m tranche	95	403	603
NatWest £500k	13	62	373
Rathbones £500k	-	50	-
	<b>391</b>	<b>1,839</b>	<b>2,269</b>



# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 17. Pension schemes

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

Contributions to these schemes were £1,379k (2022: £1,275k).

#### Defined Contribution Schemes

The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of Ambitious about Autism. Pension costs charged in the statement of financial activities represent the contributions payable by Ambitious about Autism for the year.

#### Teachers' Pension Scheme

##### Introduction

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pensions Regulations (2010) and, from 1 April 2014, by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for full-time teachers in academies and, from 1 January 2007, automatic for teachers in part-time employment following appointment or a change of contract, although they are able to opt out.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and members contribute on a 'pay as you go' basis - these contributions along with those made by employers are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

#### Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2023 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The

latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The 2020 valuation report was published by the Teachers Pension on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.6% of pensionable pay from 1 April 2024
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million.

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is a multi-employer pension scheme. The group is unable to quantify its share of liabilities under the scheme and therefore, in accordance with FRS 102 has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The group has set out above the information available on the scheme.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism in the year amounted to £350k (2022: £315k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust in the year amounted to £254k (2022: £198k).

21 Ambitious about Autism employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2023 (2022: 27).

26 Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2023 (2022: 22).

#### Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds. The total contributions made for the year ended 31 August 2023 were £379k (2022: £420k), of which employer's contributions totalled £334k (2022: £340k) and employees' contributions totalled £89k (2022: £80k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2023, the average employer contribution rate was 22.1%, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2023 no employees took advantage of the 50/50 option, where employees can pay 50% of normal contributions to build up half the normal pension.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013 and on 21 July 2022 the Department for Education reaffirmed its commitment to the guarantee, with a parliamentary minutes published on gov.uk.

At 31 August 2023, 64 employees were members of the scheme (2022: 64).

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2023 by a qualified independent actuary.

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2023 £'000	At 31 August 2022 £'000
Rate of increase in salaries	3.90%	3.90%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.90%	2.90%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.25%	4.20%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.90%	2.90%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00%	50.00%

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

Sensitivity analysis	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Adjustment to discount rate</b>	<b>+0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>
Present value of total obligation	1,911	1,971	2,033
Projected service cost	194	203	212
<b>Adjustment to long term salary increase</b>	<b>+0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>
Present value of total obligation	1,972	1,971	1,970
Projected service cost	203	203	203
<b>Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation</b>	<b>+0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,033	1,971	1,911
Projected service cost	212	203	194
<b>Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions</b>	<b>+ 1 Year</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>- 1 Year</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,022	1,971	1,921
Projected service cost	211	203	196

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	At 31 August 2023 £'000	At 31 August 2022 £'000
<b>Retiring today</b>		
Males	20.7	21.0
Females	23.2	23.5
<b>Retiring in 20 years</b>		
Males	22.0	22.3
Females	24.6	24.9

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2023 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2023		At 31 August 2022	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
<b>Equities</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>64%</b>
Gilts	96	5%	89	5%
Other bonds	422	21%	437	24%
Property	85	4%	93	5%
Cash	77	4%	9	1%
Infrastructure	34	2%	16	1%
<b>Total market value of assets</b>	<b>2,002</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,810</b>	<b>100%</b>
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	(1,971)		(2,094)	
<b>Asset/(deficit) in the scheme</b>	<b>31</b>		<b>(284)</b>	

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

Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities	31 August 2023	31 August 2022
	£'000	£'000
Current service cost (including employee contributions)	(322)	(933)
Net interest cost	(5)	(39)
Administration	(3)	(1)
<b>Total operating charge</b>	<b>(330)</b>	<b>(973)</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
<b>Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:</b>		
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>2,094</b>	<b>3,957</b>
Current service cost	322	933
Interest cost	90	68
Actuarial (gain)	(653)	(2,954)
Benefits paid	29	10
Employee contributions	89	80
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>1,971</b>	<b>2,094</b>

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
<b>Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:</b>		
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>1,810</b>	<b>1,492</b>
Interest on assets	85	29
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	(59)	(140)
Other actuarial losses	(283)	-
Employer contributions	334	340
Employee contributions	89	80
Administration expenses	(3)	(1)
Benefits paid	29	10
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>2,002</b>	<b>1,810</b>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	6,102	16,181
Investments	1,693	-	-	-	1,693
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	7	116
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	4,752	7,164
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	31	(4,126)
	2,776	5,890	1,470	10,892	21,028

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,079	-	10,079
Investments	1,693	-	-	1,693
Intangible fixed assets	-	109	-	109
Net current assets	1,083	(141)	1,470	2,412
Long term liabilities	-	(4,157)	-	(4,157)
	2,776	5,890	1,470	10,136



# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 18. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Fund balances as at 31 August 2022 are represented by:

Group	Ambitious about Autism		Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		Total funds £'000
	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	6,132	16,399
Investments	1,762	-	-	-	1,762
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	10	123
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	4,004	6,762
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(284)	(4,974)
	2,863	6,261	1,086	9,862	20,072

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,267	-	10,267
Investments	1,762	-	-	1,762
Intangible fixed assets	-	113	-	113
Net current assets	1,101	571	1,086	2,758
Long term liabilities	-	(4,690)	-	(4,690)
	2,863	6,261	1,086	10,210

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 19a. Movement in funds

For the year ended 31 August 2023:	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	75	498	(220)	-	353
Education Services projects	348	619	(585)	(51)	331
Autism Exchange	147	-	(17)	-	130
Family Support	248	112	(156)	-	204
Participation	48	428	(321)	-	155
TreeHouse School	54	382	(187)	(140)	109
Online Youth Support	84	100	(86)	-	98
IT Equipment	69	15	(51)	(5)	28
Other	13	49	-	-	62
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>2,203</b>	<b>(1,623)</b>	<b>(196)</b>	<b>1,470</b>
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	9,862	6,738	(4,798)	(910)	10,892
<b>Total group restricted funds</b>	<b>10,948</b>	<b>8,941</b>	<b>(6,421)</b>	<b>(1,106)</b>	<b>12,362</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:</b>					
<b>Designated funds</b>					
Fixed assets	3,857	-	(657)	483	3,683
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	1,102	-	(217)	-	885
Covid Recovery fund	492	-	(9)	-	483
Service Development	199	-	(121)	-	78
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	606	-	-	150	756
<b>Total designated funds</b>	<b>6,261</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,004)</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>5,890</b>
General funds	2,863	18,939	(19,499)	473	2,776
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds</b>	<b>9,124</b>	<b>18,939</b>	<b>(20,503)</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>8,666</b>
<b>Total group funds</b>	<b>20,072</b>	<b>27,880</b>	<b>(26,924)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21,028</b>

#### Transfers

£483k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £145k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £338k of fixed assets funded from unrestricted funds.

£150k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund.

£910k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate swap option to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap in February 2011. The option swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 with a fair value gain of £13k recognised in the year.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 19a. Movement in funds (continued)

	At the start of the year £'000	Incoming resources and gains £'000	Outgoing resources and losses £'000	Transfers £'000	At the end of the year £'000
For the year ended 31 August 2022:					
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	-	292	(217)	-	75
Education Services projects	100	709	(461)	-	348
Autism Exchange	151	25	(29)	-	147
Family Support	29	343	(124)	-	248
Participation	50	156	(158)	-	48
TreeHouse School	182	158	(138)	(148)	54
Online Information Support	10	-	(10)	-	-
Online Youth Support	8	100	(24)	-	84
IT Equipment	77	22	(18)	(12)	69
Other	15	-	(2)	-	13
<b>Total Ambitious About Autism restricted funds</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>1,805</b>	<b>(1,181)</b>	<b>(160)</b>	<b>1,086</b>
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	6,778	5,790	(2,009)	(697)	9,862
<b>Total group restricted funds</b>	<b>7,400</b>	<b>7,595</b>	<b>(3,190)</b>	<b>(857)</b>	<b>10,948</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:</b>					
<b>Designated funds:</b>					
Fixed assets	4,014	-	(682)	525	3,857
School development	5	-	-	-	5
Transformation fund	1,182	-	(80)	-	1,102
Covid Recovery fund	668	-	(176)	-	492
Service Development	-	-	(8)	207	199
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	684	-	-	(78)	606
<b>Total designated funds</b>	<b>6,553</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(946)</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>6,261</b>
General funds	2,414	16,878	(16,632)	203	2,863
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds</b>	<b>8,967</b>	<b>16,878</b>	<b>(17,578)</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>9,124</b>
<b>Total group funds</b>	<b>16,367</b>	<b>24,473</b>	<b>(20,768)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20,072</b>

#### Transfers

£525k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £160k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, and £178k of fixed assets funded from the designated repairs and maintenance fund.

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

£544k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the Covid fund to provide a contingency against future risks as a result of Coronavirus, including additional costs or losses in income.

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

£451k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge and salaries recharged to Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

£100k has been designated from the Buildings Maintenance and Development fund to provide major refurbishment works at TreeHouse School.

£207k has been designated from unrestricted funds to the service development fund.

£697k was transferred from Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2023

### 19b. Summary movement in funds

#### Purpose of restricted funds:

Ambitious College	The charity continues its work to develop Ambitious College, London's first specialist day college for autistic young people aged 16–25 including those with learning disabilities. Ambitious College has two campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and West Thames College.
Education Services projects	This fund includes developing and embedding a competency framework for the Ambitious Approach. The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice, which was designed to be used in our education settings to support autistic children and young people. At its heart, the approach is centred around improving the quality of life of autistic young people while they are in education and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. The framework is being embedded in the charity, and in partner schools and colleges, and includes audit tools, implementation guidance, evaluation protocols, parent toolkits and training materials.
Employ Autism and Autism Exchange	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic people can become part of the workforce. The programme acts as a bridge to employment for autistic people by working with employers and careers and employability professionals to increase confidence in autism and neurodiversity, and as a result create opportunities in the workplace. We deliver training, resources and ongoing mentorship to a wide network of partners across the UK and together drive a collective movement for change. The programme comprises the Employ Autism network, the Employ Autism Higher Education network and Autism Exchange.
Learner and Family Support	Our specialist Learner and Family Support team helps the parents and carers of autistic children and young people attending our educational settings throughout their journey with us. We ensure that families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people in their care by providing timely direct advice and support. This includes support at times of transition such as from school to further education, training or other placement, and to adulthood; and advocacy for families to try and secure statutory services such as respite care or social care support.
Participation	Young people are at the heart of everything we do. We listen to them to ensure our work reflects their views and needs. We stand with them and ensure their voices are heard and considered by policymakers and decision-makers, the media and the general public. Through our Ambitious Youth Network, online peer support and project work we bring autistic young people together to tackle isolation and loneliness, understand their autistic identity and have their voices heard.

#### Purpose of restricted funds: (continued)

Treehouse School	Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.
Online Information Support	A project to provide vital information online for parents and carers, and empowerment to connect and support each other.
Online Youth Support	A project to provide vital information online for autistic young people, including through a new online community platform for the Ambitious Youth Network.
IT Equipment	This fund supports additional IT equipment and resources for 300 autistic children and young people in our schools and college, so they can access education and support.
Other	Other funds represent a number of small funds.

#### Purpose of designated funds:

Fixed Assets	This fund represents the net book value of the fixed assets, net of the loans used to purchase them, which are not, by the nature of fixed assets, readily available for other purposes.
Schools development	The school fund has been established to fund school development.
Transformation fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation's new strategy.
Buildings maintenance and development fund	The fund has been allocated to provide for any repairs to and development of the building based on 30-year life cycle costings prepared by external consultants.
Covid Recovery fund	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
Service development	This fund has been established to support the growth of existing and new services.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

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

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Net income	956	3,705
Depreciation and amortisation charges	901	913
Losses on investments	137	159
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	(6)	-
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(181)	(119)
Interest payable	235	120
(Increase) in debtors	(7,433)	(389)
(Decrease) in derivative liability	(25)	(50)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	5,512	(107)
(Decrease) in pension deficit	(315)	(2,181)
<b>Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities</b>	<b>(219)</b>	<b>2,051</b>

#### 21. Operating lease commitments

The group's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Property		Equipment	
	2023 £'000	2022 (restated) £'000	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Less than one year	142	145	21	8
One to five years	412	511	11	7
Over five years	42	75	-	-
	<b>596</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 22. Post balance sheet event

On 1 September 2023 St John's School and College, Brighton (registered charity number 1061001) joined the Ambitious about Autism group as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Charity. The majority of the St John's Board of Trustees stepped down and were replaced by members of the Ambitious about Autism Board of Trustees, with one existing Trustee remaining in place to ensure some continuity of governance.

On 30 September 2023 the net assets and operations of St. John's School and College were transferred in full to Ambitious about Autism. All staff employed at that date were transferred to the employment of Ambitious about Autism in accordance with TUPE requirements.

The net assets of St John's School and College were £7,246k, for which all these were acquired for consideration of £nil on 30 September 2023.

#### 23. Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is £1.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

#### 24. Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

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

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust operates independently from Ambitious about Autism and as such Ambitious about Autism has no right or access to the assets (cash and non-cash) of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust. In the group accounts all income and reserves of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust are treated as restricted. While both entities operate independently the accounts are consolidated on the basis that Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is the sole corporate member of Ambitious about Autism.

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
<b>Balance sheet</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	6,102	6,132
Intangible assets	7	10
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	2,500	306
Cash at bank and in hand	1,005	5
Short-term deposit	3,887	4,560
	<b>7,392</b>	<b>4,871</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(2,640)	(867)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>4,752</b>	<b>4,004</b>
<b>Net assets excluding pension liability</b>	<b>10,861</b>	<b>10,136</b>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	31	(284)
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>10,892</b>	<b>9,852</b>
<b>Funds of the Academy Trust:</b>		
<b>Restricted funds</b>		
Fixed asset fund	6,263	6,206
Restricted income fund	4,598	3,940
Pension Reserve	31	(284)
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>10,892</b>	<b>9,862</b>
<b>Unrestricted income funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>10,892</b>	<b>9,862</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

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

A summarised extract of Ambitious about Autism Schools SoFA for the year:	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Restricted Fixed Asset Fund £'000	Total £'000
Income from:				
Donations and capital grants	-	18	90	108
Charitable activities	-	6,606	-	6,606
Other income	-	24	-	24
	-	6,648	90	6,738
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(5,772)	(247)	(6,019)
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	876	(157)	719
Transfer Between Funds	-	(214)	214	-
Other recognised (losses)	-	311	-	311
Net movement in funds	-	973	57	1,030
<b>Funds brought forward</b>	-	<b>3,656</b>	<b>6,206</b>	<b>9,862</b>
<b>Funds carried forward</b>	-	<b>4,629</b>	<b>6,263</b>	<b>10,892</b>

The charity is using an interest rate swap to manage its exposure to interest rate movements on its £1.1m bank loan with NatWest. The agreement was entered into a variable to fixed interest rate swap with Natwest in February 2011. The contract swaps the variable rate of interest for a fixed rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033 and with a fair value loss of £136k recognised in the year.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2023

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

For the year ended 31 August 2022

		Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
<b>Income from:</b>						
<b>Donations and legacies:</b>						
Gifts and donated services	2	453	1,545	1,998	96	2,094
<b>Charitable activities:</b>						
Educational services	3	15,914	189	16,103	5,685	21,788
External affairs	3	-	29	29	-	29
<b>Other income</b>						
Trading income		342	42	384	9	393
Investment income		169	-	169	-	169
<b>Total income</b>		<b>16,878</b>	<b>1,805</b>	<b>18,683</b>	<b>5,790</b>	<b>24,473</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		750	-	750	-	750
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	13
		<b>763</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>763</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>						
Educational services		15,300	555	15,855	4,823	20,678
External affairs		1,356	626	1,982	-	1,982
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17,419</b>	<b>1,181</b>	<b>18,600</b>	<b>4,823</b>	<b>23,423</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)</b>		<b>(541)</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>1,050</b>
Net gains on investments		(159)	-	(159)	-	(159)
Net losses on pension deficit		-	-	-	2,814	2,814
<b>Net (expenditure)/income</b>		<b>(700)</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>(76)</b>	<b>3,781</b>	<b>3,705</b>
Transfers between funds	19	857	(160)	697	(697)	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>157</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>3,084</b>	<b>3,705</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>						
Total funds brought forward	19	8,967	622	9,589	6,778	16,367
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9,124</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>10,210</b>	<b>9,862</b>	<b>20,072</b>

# We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.



## Contact us

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

☎ 020 8815 5444

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

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

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

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

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