



**Ambitious  
about Autism**

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# **Annual report and accounts 2023–24**

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**Ambitious about Autism shares my belief that all autistic young people should have the chance to achieve their ambitions – whatever those might be – and be accepted for themselves. I'm very proud to support this charity."**

Travis George, singer and actor.  
Appointed Ambitious about Autism ambassador in February 2024.

# 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.



**Our  
values**

## **We celebrate difference**

creating a world where everyone belongs.

## **We are open**

to new approaches, in how we make decisions, and engage with our community.

## **We love learning**

and commit to learn from our successes and mistakes; sharing knowledge, expertise and resources.

## **We work together**

with autistic children and young people, parents and carers, our partners and staff to maximise impact and reach.



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# Foreword:

## Welcome from the chair of trustees and chief executive

**This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the incredible work that has taken place across our charity this year, enabling autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.**

It also marks the third year of our Time for Ambition strategy and is testament to the achievements and progress we've made against our ambitious goals.

Sadly, autistic children and young people continue to face enormous barriers in their daily lives. Unfair treatment is becoming routine and invisible, and goes unchallenged. Our work aims to break down barriers to opportunity. We want to ensure that the right support is in place at the right time for every autistic child and young person.

This year we expanded our excellent education offer for more autistic children and young people across London and the South East. We opened Spring School in Kingston and completed our merger with St. John's College in Brighton. We also celebrated successful Ofsted results across our network of schools and colleges.

Our Youth Network continued to expand and we launched a national preventative mental health programme for autistic pupils called **Autistic and OK**, in partnership with Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation. The programme, which received national media attention during its launch, has been accessed by more than 600 secondary schools across the UK.

As part of our Employ Autism programme, we developed a new **Autism Confidence** framework for employers. As we entered the fourth year of our award-winning partnership with Marsh McLennan, they became the first employer to receive Autism Confidence status.

In the run-up to the general election we empowered autistic young people to make their voice heard and register to vote. We worked to ensure decision-makers continued to listen to autistic children, young people and their families to create a SEND system that provides positive outcomes in education and beyond.

It was another successful year for our fundraising events as we continued to raise the profile of our charity and work with supporters who share our vision and mission.

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, staff and volunteers. Your continuing support helps autistic children and young people be themselves and realise their ambitions.



**Bob Bishop**  
Chair of Trustees



**Jolanta Lasota**  
Chief Executive

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# Foreword:

## Welcome from the chair of the youth council

**I am very proud to be the Chair of Ambitious about Autism's Youth Council. My role is to help facilitate the Youth Council meetings and represent the views of the other Youth Council members. Being autistic is part of who I am, and I would not change it.**

I first came across Ambitious about Autism after researching specialist schools on the internet, which was a specialist interest of mine at the time. It was the first time I had come across an autism charity which I thought represented all autistic children and young people.

I joined the Youth Network in May 2021 and after that became a member of the Youth Council.

Ambitious about Autism has given me so many opportunities. I've been able to attend weekly peer-support sessions, I've been part of the development of the Time for Ambition strategy, and I've shared my experiences in education with high-level decision-makers in government.

This has had a very positive impact on my life because it has given me a strong sense of belonging and enjoyment, and I don't feel as isolated or lonely anymore. It has given me the opportunity to share my passion about autism with others and to come across other young people with similar views and experiences to me. I feel like I'm able to be a voice for autistic children and young people.



**Alice Willans**  
Chair of the Ambitious  
Youth Council

# Our impact





# Our key achievements this year

Over  
**4,000**



autistic young people connected through the Ambitious Youth Network.

Nearly  
**4,000**



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

Over  
**300**



autistic people received tailored careers sessions and information through Employ Autism.

Nearly  
**450**



pupils and learners were supported via our schools and colleges and we celebrated three successful Ofsted results.

Over  
**£3 million**




funds raised to stand with autistic children and young people.

Over  
**600**



secondary schools accessed our preventative mental health programme Autistic and OK.

# Excellent education



**We believe in the right of all autistic children and young people to have an excellent and inclusive education. We want them to learn, thrive, achieve and, ultimately, have a good quality of life.**

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## Growing our reach and impact

This was an exciting year of growth as we expanded our high-quality educational offer to hundreds more autistic children and young people across London and the South East.

Our newest special free school, Spring School, opened to its first pupils on a temporary site in Kingston. Spring School initially supported 36 pupils, with the aim of accommodating 90 pupils by 2028–29.

At the start of the year, St. John's College officially joined the Ambitious about Autism group. Together, our aim is to provide high-quality education for more autistic young people through our specialist college and by sharing best practice and resources with others locally.

As a founding member of the Autism Education Trust, we continued to influence policy and practice nationally, delivering training this year to more schools and post-16 education professionals than ever before.

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## Celebrating successful Ofsted inspections

Three of our schools and colleges were visited by Ofsted during the summer term this year – TreeHouse School, St. John's College and The Rise School. TreeHouse School retained its 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted. St. John's College retained its 'good' rating and was also rated 'outstanding' in personal development. The Rise School also retained its 'good' rating and received 'outstanding' in personal development and sixth form provision.





## Preparing for work: Sophie and Prince's stories

**Ambitious College's supported internship programme continued to support young people to develop employability skills and secure jobs this year.**

Sophie and Prince developed their workplace skills on the programme at the Whittington Hospital in North London. After graduating, they both secured their first jobs.

During her internship, Sophie worked on both a post-surgery ward and in the hospital's Play team, which supports children at the hospital, where she developed her care skills and completed support worker and care training.

Prince had two placements at the hospital, one with the Stores team, and another with the Pharmacy Distribution team. He also worked at the M&S Foodhall in Archway. Sophie secured a role as a nursery assistant and Prince secured a job in the Stores team at Barnet General Hospital.

Sophie said: "When I joined the supported internship programme last September, I was very nervous and didn't know what to expect. But within the first few weeks we did lots of team-building activities that helped us develop our friendships.

"The team also supported us with job applications and interview practice. This helped me get my new role at the nursery, which I'm really excited about!"

Prince said: "I've really enjoyed my time on the supported internship programme. I've made good friendships with the other interns and have enjoyed going to weekly socials.

"The programme has really helped to improve my confidence and my job skills, and I am proud to be joining the Stores team at Barnet General Hospital."



**Sophie**



**Prince**



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## National education campaigning

Our **Written Off?** campaign was launched in response to reforms proposed in the government's 'Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan', published in March 2023. This included proposals that deeply worried many parents, who feared the erosion of rights they rely upon for the sake of their child's education.

At the same time, local authorities are struggling to fund SEND provision in their areas. To address these challenges, we need the government to step in and make children with SEND a priority.

Given the scale and urgency of the challenge, a core strand of the campaign this year has been working with campaigners and our coalition partners to shine a light on the problem in the media. This included securing national media coverage about the large numbers of autistic children who are absent from school.



Alongside this, we worked with supportive parliamentarians to make the case for government action both publicly and privately, as well as submitting evidence to various government consultations to shape policy formation. In the run-up to the general election we empowered autistic young people to make their voice heard and register to vote.

We're currently preparing the next phase of the Written Off? campaign, to influence the actions of the new government.

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## Ambitious Approach

The Ambitious Approach is our model of education practice used across our education settings to support autistic children and young people. Developed to put quality of life at the centre of all we do, it is based upon pupils' and learners' 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.

We constantly develop, search for and are open to new approaches that are ethical and have a robust evidence base. We share our experience and evidence with others to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of autism education. We're undertaking a review of this framework to inform the next stage of our development to make sure we provide the best opportunities for our pupils and learners to enjoy their best quality of life.



# 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.**



Our Employ Autism programme seeks to remove the barriers to employment that autistic young people face. We work closely with employers to connect them directly with a pool of uniquely talented autistic employees. We also provide training and support to young people, careers professionals and employers.



## Our impact

133



**young people had paid work experience via our trained employer partners, including 92 in our Civil Service summer internships programme.**

76



**employers undertook training on understanding autism in the workplace, with 46 going on to offer paid work experience to autistic young people.**

312



**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.**

Our team delivered

300



**tailored careers, information advice and guidance sessions to young people.**

## Arber's story

**This year, 92 interns took part in our long-standing Civil Service internship programme. The programme offers autistic people work placements in a range of government departments to help them gain valuable experience and prepare for employment.**

Arber, 19, found out about the internship opportunity through an advertisement on LinkedIn. He had previously struggled to find work after completing a BTEC qualification in IT. Through the programme he completed a four-week placement with the Department for Transport.

During his internship, he benefitted from rest-breaks and access to a quiet space, which helped with his concentration and productivity. He said: “My placement in the Department for Transport was my first experience of an internship – and it was great! Everyone in the department was friendly and kind, and offered me support whenever I needed it.”

He is now planning to look for an apprenticeship at a large company where he can work on big projects that make an impact.



Arber



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## Autism Confidence

We were delighted to announce Marsh McLennan as the first employer to achieve **Autism Confidence** this year. This has been made possible by the commitment and determination of Marsh McLennan colleagues, whose incredible efforts have raised awareness, helped shape recruitment practices and developed a workplace culture that both welcomes and celebrates autistic people.

The design of the Autism Confidence status for employers has enabled us to further develop our **Employ Autism** programme, which offers a structured approach to embedding inclusive practice right across an organisation. Enabling autistic young people to access paid work experience remains central to all we do. We continue to partner with employers of all sizes and sectors, right across the country, to source and shape those opportunities.

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## Careers Education Framework

This year we launched a series of free, online resources to help careers education leaders provide autistic young people with informed, tailored advice about their journey from education to employment. The autism-specific **Careers Education Framework** (CEF) has been designed to ensure that autistic young people in mainstream and specialist secondary schools and colleges have access to effective careers education.

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## Careers education in our schools and colleges

We want every autistic young person to have a good careers education at school and in further and higher education. Our focus this year was on increasing engagement with local employers to offer essential work experience opportunities for our pupils and learners.

National Careers Week took place during 4–8 March 2024. Each educational setting organised its own timetable of activities for the week, engaging over 180 pupils and learners and involving more than 14 employers.



## David's story

**David\*, a learner at Ambitious College, has a passion to work in the retail industry but struggled to take part in work experience outside of college due to mental health challenges.**

Recognising the need for a tailored approach, the team at Ambitious College organised for David to take part in internal work experience within his familiar college environment.

He took on the role of administrative assistant at the college, his duties including greeting visitors, maintaining records, managing petty cash and handling Oyster cards. He also answered phones in the office, enhancing his communication skills.

His manager said: "David was very engaged and listened attentively. He followed instructions to the letter, got out the pouches, counted the exact amount of money from the petty cash tin and then put it in their individual wallets. He has done a lovely job."

David's journey demonstrates the success of internal work experience in overcoming barriers.

\*Name has been changed.





# Health and wellbeing



**We work to make sure that autistic children and young people have timely access to the support and care that will enable good physical and mental health and their wellbeing.**

## Autistic and OK

We created the [Autistic and OK](#) programme, in collaboration with Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation, to empower autistic pupils to take control of their mental health and wellbeing, understand themselves and feel OK.

The programme received national media attention when it launched in February 2024 and has since been downloaded by over 3,000 individuals and from over 600 secondary schools.



**It's more than a programme. It can have a really big, positive impact on an autistic pupil's experience of school and also on how they cope generally in life."**

Lily, 18, an autistic youth advisor who helped to co-create the Autistic and OK programme.

## Post-diagnostic support programme

Last year we launched [Understanding You, Discovering You](#), a peer-support course to support autistic young people aged 16–25 in their transition to adulthood, post-diagnosis.

As we moved into year two of the project, we began a feasibility study with the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR).

This year we also hosted a conference in London to explore autistic young people's experiences following diagnosis, bringing together autistic young people, researchers and sector experts.





# Active citizenship in the community

**Autistic children and young people must be empowered to influence the decisions that affect their lives. We work to ensure this happens.**



## Ambitious Youth Network

Our UK-wide platform for autistic young people now has over 4,000 members. They can find opportunities and contribute to content, resources and groups designed to support their autistic peers. The network helps autistic young people understand their identity and feel they belong. They are empowered to influence the world around them, through media, campaigning and opportunities to influence policy.



**Meeting other autistic young people through the network has been a relief. I've been able to listen to their stories and realise that there are other autistic young people like me going through similar things."**

Harvey, a member of the Ambitious Youth Network.

# Ambitious youth network





# Family and relationships

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair holding a young child. The child is laughing and looking down. They are outdoors, with a wooden fence and lavender plants in the background.

**We want to make sure that families are fully informed and have the skills and confidence to support autistic children and young people.**



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## Learner and family services

The Learner and Family Services team supports pupils, learners and families who attend our schools and colleges on their journey from admissions to transition to life beyond education. They ensure families have increased knowledge, skills and confidence by providing timely direct advice and support.

This year our Admissions team processed over 1,000 queries and applications across our education settings. The team also successfully helped 64 young people who were transitioning to new settings or into employment. They ran a monthly support group for parents and carers and provided support and advocacy on a range of complex welfare issues.

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## Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is our online community for parents and carers of autistic children and young people. It is a place where they can connect with others and access informative resources such as webinars and blogs.

This year we hosted a range of informative webinars on topics such as supporting autistic children with anxiety, understanding the Mental Capacity Act and advice on wills and trusts.



**We have had no support since my son's diagnosis and having resources like Talk about Autism helps make me feel less alone and more able to cope. It feels like someone cares."**

Parent and Talk about Autism member.

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## Autism Central

NHS England's Workforce, Training and Education team commissioned Autism Central, which is being delivered nationally by nine founding charities including Ambitious about Autism. The service offers co-designed and co-delivered, high-quality and accessible autism information, education and coaching for families and carers.

Last year, we became a founding partner for a new free education programme, hosted through Autism Central, called Peer Educators. In partnership with the charity Contact, we promote sessions for the regional hubs in London and the Midlands. These sessions for parents and carers cover issues such as sensory processing, getting support at school, sleep and mental wellbeing.

## Ruth's story

**Ruth\* is autistic and has a learning disability. As she entered her fourth and final year of study at St. John's College, it was identified that she would need a slow transition to her next placement, as she finds change extremely challenging.**

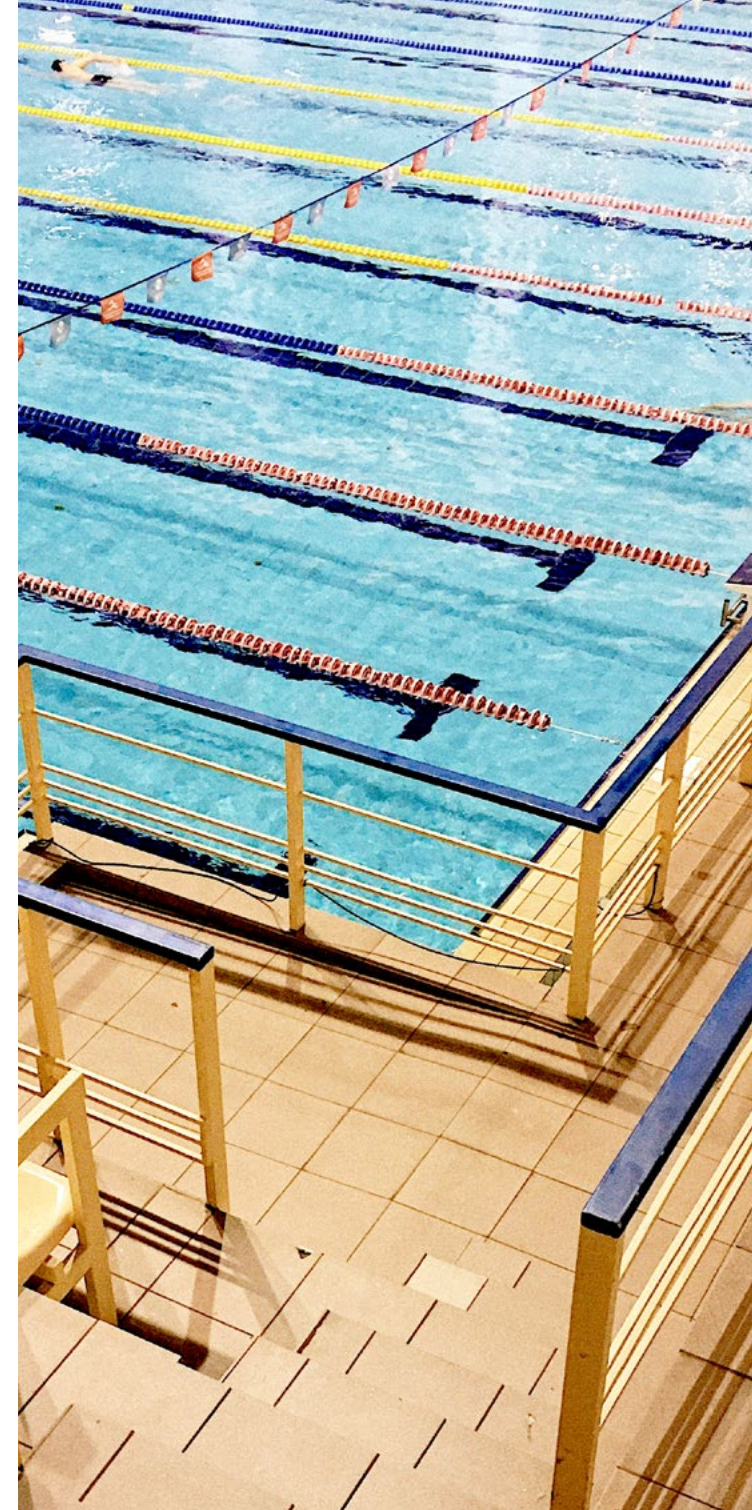
Taking into account Ruth's interests and preferences, her family and professionals agreed that her social care needs would be met by her attendance at a day service placement.

The St. John's College team worked closely with her local authority social care team to ensure Ruth could have a smooth transition. They used a social story to help Ruth prepare for her journey from her home to her new setting and back again. She had regular visits to her new placement, and she travelled by bus to get there. She even attended their Christmas party in December.

By Spring she started going to the local swimming pool, which is a regular activity of the day service users. St. John's College staff also worked closely with staff at the day service to help them develop a relationship with Ruth and ensure they understood her support needs.

In July, Ruth attended the day service for her first five-day week. Thanks to great teamwork and support, she has made a successful move out of education at St. John's College and now attends her day service full-time.

\*Name has been changed.







# Our partners and supporters

In 2023–24, we once more achieved so much for autistic children and young people thanks to our amazing partners and supporters. We are grateful to them for enabling us to continue championing rights, campaigning for change and creating opportunities.



Thanks to the passion and commitment of partners and supporters, we are grateful to have celebrated many milestones and achievements this year, and have been able to grow our reach and impact.

In 2023–24, despite an ever-challenging fundraising environment, thanks to the generous support of members of the public, philanthropists, companies, trusts and foundations, we exceeded our target, raising £3m.

We're so grateful to all those who have joined or continue to stand alongside us, further amplifying our impact and supporting autistic children and young people to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

## 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.

### Night of Ambition

In March, in partnership with TalkTalk and PXC, we hosted our 15th Night of Ambition fundraising gala. The event, held at The JW Marriot Grosvenor House, raised £380,000 through sponsorship, table sales, the live and silent auction, as well as generous donations from guests. We are hugely grateful to all of our sponsors, including our headline sponsor, CGI. Autistic singer Travis George provided the outstanding entertainment, making it a hugely memorable night for all our wonderful and generous guests.

### Ambitious 220

This year's Manchester to London ride, in partnership with Rapha, was a huge success with the best rider feedback we've ever had for the event. On Sunday 22 June, led by Rapha founder and Ambitious about Autism Ambassador Simon Mottram, we raised £200,000.



## London Marathon

This year our inspiring runners raised an incredible £100,000 in what has become the most successful and record-breaking London Marathon to date. One of our runners, Ben Walley, took part in eight marathons in eight days before he went on to complete the London Marathon as part of his ongoing support for Ambitious about Autism.

## Community and challenge events

Thanks to our individual supporters, we raised over £90,000 through a wide range of activities. Live gaming streams, running, trekking and skydiving all featured in the different ways that people chose to stand with autistic children and young people. With special thanks to the Wilde Family and Warren Whitely for raising £5,000 with their workout event.





## Our strategic partners

### Pears Foundation

We are deeply grateful to everyone at the Pears Foundation for their exceptional partnership. Their long-standing support has been instrumental in the successful completion of our Employ Autism pilot, significantly enhancing the programme's credibility and its potential for expansion.

Moreover, the Foundation's commitment to our work over the years has been instrumental in making our schools and colleges a reality. Their philanthropic leadership supports us in so many ways, contributing towards our security and stability as an organisation, allowing us to continue making a profound difference.



### Marsh McLennan

This has been a very successful year for our award-winning partnership with Marsh McLennan. The organisation has supported all aspects of our work while continuing to empower talent and unlock opportunities for autistic people within the company. Through the wonderful fundraising efforts of teams at Marsh McLennan, we raised over £259,000.

Demonstrating its commitment to encouraging inclusive workplace cultures, Marsh McLennan hosted 80 industry contacts and clients, sharing its phenomenal journey in becoming our first partner to achieve Autism Confidence.

During World Autism Acceptance Month, Marsh McLennan created 'Standing Together', a mosaic artwork made up of images of individuals who have advocated for our cause throughout our partnership.





## TalkTalk, TalkTalk Business and PXC

We have proudly partnered with TalkTalk Group since 2006. Following the demerger of TalkTalk, we are happy to say that we have continued our relationships with all three branches of the newly devolved TalkTalk Group: TalkTalk, TalkTalk Business and PXC.

Having welcomed five autistic interns to its workforce, TalkTalk Group continues to be the generous key partner of Night of Ambition, a leading Employ Autism partner. The group also provides key pro-bono services that enable our organisation to stay connected and continues to support autistic young people in our educational settings.



## Rapha

Thanks to the support of its founder and former chief executive, Simon Mottram, Rapha Racing Ltd has raised close to £2m 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.

*Rapha.*



## Zurich UK and the Z Zurich Foundation

Following the pilot of the Autistic and OK programme in 2023, our continued partnership with Zurich UK and Z Zurich Foundation saw the successful roll-out of the programme in February 2024. It has been very well received, with a higher number of schools than anticipated downloading the programme materials, and a greater number of autistic young people being reached.

Our Employability and Training team has produced a series of e-learning modules for staff to complete to develop their autism-confident practice. These sessions are being promoted internally within Zurich.



## Reckitt Benckiser UK

In the second year of our three-year partnership with its brand Vanish, Reckitt Benckiser UK committed to another collaboration around World Autism Acceptance Week. Through our campaign **More than just clothes**, this year's focus has been on highlighting the importance of clothing to the autistic community by telling two autistic young people's stories about how their clothing has impacted their lives.

This year, we invited viewers of the campaign to sign a pledge acknowledging that for many autistic people clothes are more than just clothes. With every pledge signed, Vanish will donate £10 to help support our work to create a world where autistic people are heard, included and supported.



## Lead funding partners

### Graham and Susan Tobbell OBE

We are immensely thankful to Graham and Susan for their unwavering support. Their involvement has been pivotal in providing greater employment opportunities for autistic young people, enabling them to be themselves.

### Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's multi-year support has enabled us to expand our Ambitious Youth Network nationally and build connections between autistic young people experiencing acute isolation and loneliness. The Foundation is a trusted partner, sharing insights on equity, diversity and inclusion, and providing access to training and resources. We are also extremely thankful to have been able to evaluate externally our programme's impact, thanks to their support.



## City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation enables autistic young Londoners to access the support they need once they move on from Ambitious College. Our Learner and Family Services team work with the young person, their parents and carers, staff and the onward settings to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. The Foundation's generosity helps autistic young people to get the support they need and pursue their dreams as they move into adulthood.



## Constable Educational Trust

Through Ambitious Hubs, an innovative pilot project, Constable Educational Trust, a lead funder in the redevelopment of our playground and life skills kitchens at TreeHouse School, extended its support to include backing the work of our Youth Participation team. Ambitious Hubs allows us to take what we've learned from our youth network and from delivering peer support and apply it in school settings. We admire the Trust's shared commitment to providing an excellent education to all children, regardless of their needs or circumstances.

The Constable Trust

## MariaMarina Foundation

Since 2016, MariaMarina Foundation has been a significant partner and ally of Ambitious about Autism. The Foundation was key to helping to realise our vision for Ambitious College and is now supporting the implementation of an employability strategy, successfully preparing hundreds of autistic young people for the workplace.

mariamarina  
FOUNDATION

## National Lottery Community Fund

Thanks to their lead support, the National Lottery Community Fund enables us to make a meaningful difference to the lives of thousands of autistic young people through our Employ Autism programme. Over the past three years, the programme has helped autistic young people move from education into employment, careers professionals to deliver autism-aware careers guidance, and employers to create a more inclusive working world. The National Lottery Community Fund's support has been instrumental in making this happen.







# A huge thanks to our partners and supporters



### Ambitious partners

Pears Foundation  
Marsh McLennan  
Rapha Racing Ltd  
TalkTalk Consumer  
TalkTalk Business  
PXC  
Z Zurich Foundation

### Lead funding partners

Graham and Susan Tobbell OBE  
Constable Educational Trust  
City Bridge Foundation – London’s biggest independent charity funder  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Joseph Levy Foundation  
MariaMarina Foundation  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Reckitt Benckiser

### Ambitious supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management  
Ali MacCallum  
Apply Recruitment  
Bernard Sunley Foundation  
Beatrice Laing Trust  
Bob Bishop  
Chapman Charitable Trust  
Charlotte Warner and Bruno Paulson  
Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters  
Chris Pond  
Clarkson Foundation  
Collaboration Company  
Compass Wellbeing CIC  
CIB  
CSDS Foundation  
Danuta Gray  
Department for Education  
Duke of Newcastle 1986 Charitable Trust  
Ellandi



Health Education England	The Lord Tim Clement-Jones CBE	Salt
Henley Insights Group	Lucy Nutt	Simon Clements
Hornsey Parochial Charities	M/Six	Simon Hillson
Hospital Saturday Fund	Magnus Schoeman	Simon and Lucy Mottram
Hounslow Educational Partnership	Mark Naughton	Snowbility
Jean Levenant	Martyn Craddock	Sue Adkins
Jean Carter*	Matt Davis and Eliza Mishcon	Teneo UK
Joanna Healey	Matt Hutnell	The Harebell Centenary Fund
John and Clare Coombe-Tennant	Michael Clark	The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
Jonathan Andrews	The Mulberry Trust	Tim Barber
Ian Karten Charitable Trust	Neil Goulden	Tottenham Grammar School Foundation
Inspire Hounslow	Nick and Pippa Medd	Tristia Harrison
Ketchum	Nick Hornby	Variety Children's Charity
Kusuma Trust UK	Paul Disley-Tindell	Dr Virginia Bovell OBE
Laurie Edmans CBE	Phil Haslam	Wooden Spoon Society
Lesley Longstone	Philippa Stobbs	YouGarden
Legend Holidays & Events	PIMCO Foundation	
Lloyds of London	Red Brick Road	
LNER	Sally Cairns	
		And all our other supporters, including those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

\*Signifies a legacy gift.



# Our fundraising approach



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## 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 instances of non-compliance with the requirements of the Code of Fundraising Practice (2022-23: 0). We received no fundraising related 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.

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## 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, Fundraising 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.





Ambitious  
about Autism

# Our people



We are committed to making Ambitious about Autism a great place to work by creating an inclusive, high-performance culture where our people can feel proud.

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## Equity, diversity and inclusion

One of our core values is that we celebrate difference. We strive to live by this value every day in all that we do. We want autistic children and young people, our staff, volunteers and supporters to feel they belong and can bring their whole professional selves to Ambitious about Autism.

This year we refreshed our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and made progress in our four key areas of focus:

### Courageous governance and leadership

We reviewed the skills and diversity of our Board of Trustees and governing bodies and recruited new members with a broader range of backgrounds and experiences. Members of our Board of Trustees and governing bodies have received training and development opportunities around EDI and we've increased the number of EDI trustee leads on committees. All leaders have had training in EDI and the members of our Executive Leadership team sponsor our EDI networks.

### Building an inclusive workplace

We have three well-established staff networks, championing ethnic diversity, LGBTQ+ rights and disability. The networks lead activities and sponsor a range of external speakers. Our EDI Committee meets regularly to monitor the organisation's progress and EDI is embedded in our induction programme and management training offer. We gather and analyse staff EDI data and review our recruitment processes to ensure they are accessible.

### High-quality and inclusive education and services

Within our schools and colleges, we continue to develop our curriculums to ensure they reflect the diverse interests, needs and experiences of the autistic children and young people we support. Our Learner and Family Services team runs a programme of workshops for parents and carers to support those who need additional help.

### Influencing national work

Through national media and influencing work we continue to highlight the experience of autistic children and young people, and the need for greater inclusivity in education and employment. A particular highlight has been our Employ Autism programme, which has continued to expand and diversify. Alongside using our evaluation findings to influence policy and practice, the work of the programme has been recognised in external awards.





## Staff engagement

Listening to our colleagues and gathering their views is key to helping us improve their experiences.

A wide-ranging staff survey in July had a response rate of 87%. It was positive to see that the majority of staff feel the work they do gives them a sense of achievement and that they 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.



## Communication and engagement

In response to feedback in the staff survey, we strengthened our communication and engagement with colleagues by investing in an internal communications advisor role, enabling us to keep our very busy staff informed and engaged with what's happening across Ambitious about Autism.

Our Staff Council continued to represent the views of staff throughout the year and led on the selection of winners for our Staff Awards ceremony in July.

## Staff recruitment

Recruitment and retention during the year has been a challenge across our sector and continues to be one of our key priorities. We closed out the year with a low vacancy rate in preparation for the new 2024–25 academic year. We continued to progress with our 'welcome bonus' programme and have expanded our overseas sponsorship certifications to help attract and secure critical Allied Health professionals, such as occupational and speech and language therapists.

## Staff wellbeing

Through our wellbeing strategy we provide a range of support to staff. Our online wellbeing hub provided tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing, and our popular cross-organisational, four-week 'Big Team Challenge' encouraged teams of staff to work together to stay active and motivated.

## Learning and development

We continue to invest in learning and development to help staff grow and improve their skills. This year we took the opportunity to refresh our management programme to ensure we can develop managers within a busy working environment. The Ambitious Managers programme is accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management and is the first step on a leadership development programme for all our aspiring leaders.

# Looking to the future

**Our three-year Time for Ambition strategy was launched in September 2021, reflecting input from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including autistic young people and their families and carers.**





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## Time for Ambition

As we approached the end of this strategy cycle, we reflected on the strategic progress made against the objectives we set at that time. While we can see that a lot has been achieved, there is still more to be done in each area.

On that basis, we've extended the strategy for a further two years, 2024–26. This will enable us to grow our impact, reach more autistic children and young people, their families and carers, and build our evidence base to influence positive change.

This strategy extension is built on thorough internal and external analysis, considering the views of autistic young people, their families and carers, our partners and other key stakeholders.

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## Our strategy at a glance

### Excellent education

We will make sure all autistic children and young people have an excellent and inclusive education, and improve policy and practice nationally by:

- expanding our specialist schools and colleges
- developing a plan to launch our Ambitious Academy to support workforce development and share best practice with others.



## Employment and enterprise

We'll ensure more autistic young people can benefit from inclusive workplaces by:

- developing new online careers information and guidance and creating internship opportunities reaching 5,000 autistic young people
- launching a new e-learning offer for employers on understanding autism and creating more inclusive workplaces.

## Health and wellbeing

We'll ensure autistic children and young people have improved physical and mental health by:

- refreshing and relaunching our [Know Your Normal](#) resource, in partnership with key mental health charities
- completing the pilot of our post-diagnostic programme [Understanding You, Discovering You](#), with the NIHR – and sharing the findings to inform wider policy and practice.

## Active citizenship in the community

We will make sure autistic young people feel less isolated and more empowered by:

- continuing to expand our [Ambitious Youth Network](#) to reach 5,000 autistic young people
- creating opportunities for autistic young people's voices and experiences to be heard by decision-makers at the highest levels.

## Family and relationships

We will help families feel more confident, empowered and less isolated by:

- providing families and the children and young people in our schools and colleges with specialist support, guidance and advocacy, during their education and beyond
- launching a new national digital information service to support struggling families, providing advice on topics such as benefits.

## Influencing policy and practice nationally

We're passionate about making a difference to the lives of autistic children and young people. We will improve policy and practice nationally by drawing on our experience within our schools and colleges and across our national networks. We'll develop campaigns based on the priorities of autistic children and young people and their families and make pragmatic decisions about the areas in which we can make the most difference.

## Strong foundations

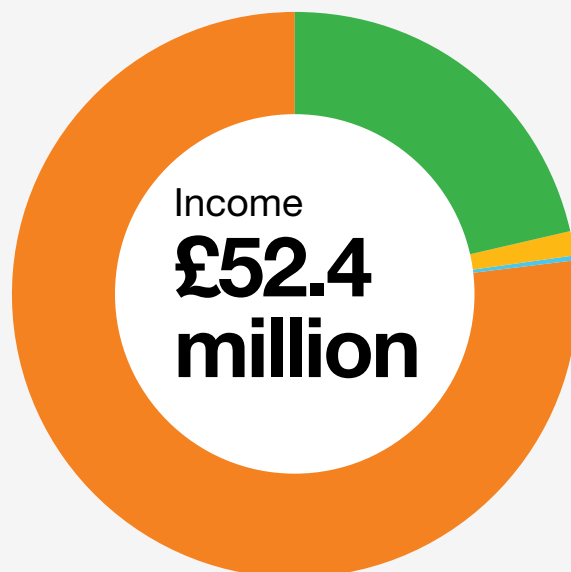
Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan. We'll develop and align our governance, leadership, people, culture, fundraising, infrastructure, systems and processes to support the implementation of our strategy.

# Financial review

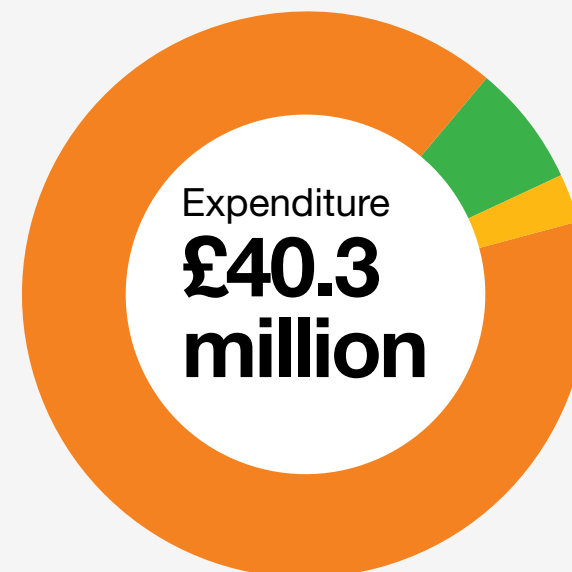




Our total income for the year was £52.4m and our overall expenditure £40.3m. Our net assets are £33.1m, compared with net assets of £21.0m at 31 August 2023.



- **£36.6m**  
 charitable activities: education services
- **£15.0m**  
 gifts and donated service (this includes £12m from St. John's College)
- **£0.6m**  
 trading income
- **£0.2m**  
 investments and other income



- **£36.4m**  
 charitable activities: education services
- **£2.7m**  
 charitable activities: external affairs
- **£1.2m**  
 raising funds

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## Financial performance

The 2023–24 year showed strong financial performance, with income increasing to £52.4m from £27.9m in 2023, reflecting growth in the services provided to autistic children and young people, primarily from the opening of Spring School (currently based in Norbiton, South London), and the transfer in of St. John's College, Brighton.

As part of the merger with St. John's College a one-off donation of £11.9 million was received, representing the net assets of St. John's College at the time of transfer to Ambitious about Autism. From the point of the transfer onwards, all income and expenditure relating to St. John's College will be reflected within the Ambitious about Autism statement of financial activities and no further donations of this nature will be recognised in relation to St John's College.

Total expenditure for the year also grew to £40.3m, an increase of £13.2m (2023: £27.1m), reflecting the same key growth factors.

Free reserves increased to £3.1m (2023: £2.8m), which is within the reserves target range of £2.4m–£3.5m. These funds are available for future development in line with the Time for Ambition strategy, while also providing resilience against financial pressures.

During the year, the charity invested £0.5m in freehold and leasehold improvements, £0.6m on furniture and equipment, £0.1m on vehicles and £0.6m on computer equipment and software.

Ambitious about Autism is using an interest rate cap 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 £1.8m, a £0.1m increase compared to 31 August 2023, despite challenging market conditions.

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## Investment policy

The charity's investment policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2024. 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 achieved in the year.

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 decreased from £1,878k to £1,833k, which is a reduction of 2.5% driven by movements in the valuation of investment holdings and reflective of wider investment markets. However, an in year gain of £140k was achieved.

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## 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, alternatives including property, and managed funds. Note 12 (see page 86) provides further analysis of these assets.

The investments are managed by investment managers appointed by the charity, currently Rathbones Group Plc. The risk profile is agreed with the investment manager and is regarded as medium risk.

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## 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.

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## 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 or fee income, a downturn in pupil/learner numbers or unexpected short-term increases in expenditure.

Our reserves policy is reviewed by the trustees annually and was last reviewed in December 2024. 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 £2.4m–£3.5m for 2024–25. As at 31 August 2024, free reserves were £3.1m, which falls within the free reserves range. The 2024–25 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 £17.4m as at 31 August 2024.

These are:

- Fixed assets, valued at £11.4m. 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 2024, there was £0.9m in this fund.
- Service development fund, with a balance of £4.9m, which will be used to support the future growth and development of activities across the organisation, in alignment with the Time for Ambition strategy.
- 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 balance remaining at the end of the year is £0.2m.

The following designated funds were closed in the year, with remaining balances transferred into the Service development fund to simplify reserves management:



- School development fund – a designated fund was created in 2013 for broader school development. £5k was transferred at the end of the year.
- Transformation fund – a fund established in 2020 to support our Time for Ambition strategy. £0.8m was transferred at the end of the year.

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 balance as at 31 August 2024 totalled £11.1m. This comprised nil unrestricted funds, £4.7m of restricted funds and £6.4m of restricted fixed asset funds. The funds balance at 31 August 2023 was £10.9m. The actuarial reports received in relation to the two Local Government Pension Schemes showed a total net asset of £340k in 2023–24 (£31k in 2022–23), as a result of unrealised gains in the underlying assets. Due to the risk of these gains reversing in the future, the balance of the pension asset within the

accounts has been restricted to nil, on the basis that there is no recoverable asset to the Trust.

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 and uncertainties

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 on a termly basis 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 and learner 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.

Recruiting and retaining skilled and committed staff is fundamental to the quality of support provided by Ambitious about Autism and our Schools Trust. We have devised our People Strategy and have several key projects focused on creating a compelling offer to work at Ambitious about Autism, improving our reward offer, supporting our career and developmental pathways for staff as well as maintaining ongoing recruitment to ensure pipelines of talent.



### 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.



### Pupil and learner related fee income

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

Annual fee uplifts are communicated to Local Authorities in March each year, enabling fee related discussions to take place over the 5 months prior to the start of the academic year to which they relate. An internal fee and debt working group meets regularly to maintain focus on fees and move forward discussions. Meetings with Local Authority contacts are scheduled to discuss queries in a timely manner. Additional information requested by Local Authorities is provided promptly with clear explanations.



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# Legal structures and governance

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## Governance

Ambitious about Autism (the Charity) 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 Charity 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 Charity 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 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 and Care Committee meets termly and is responsible for oversight of education services. It also oversees the governing bodies and Quality sub-committees 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, Spring School, Ambitious College and St. John's College are examined by their governing bodies. 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 2024. 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.

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## **Trustee recruitment, induction and training**

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 understanding autism, equity, diversity and inclusion.

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 page 81).

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## **Charity Governance Code**

The principles and recommended practice set out in the Charity Governance Code are regularly discussed by the trustees. Areas of focus in 2023–24 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, a key consideration was the impact on the diversity of the board – with reference to a skills and diversity audit undertaken in February 2024. This audit showed a diverse board with a good range and depth of relevant knowledge and experience, and recruitment of new trustees aims to enhance this further.

## Integrity

The board reviewed the principles of integrity included in the Charity Governance Code from December 2020 and confirmed that it was adhering to the new principles.

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

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

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 has 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
- Ambitious about Autism employees
- suppliers and contractors
- decision and policy-makers.

The Executive Leadership team and the 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 benefits to our pupils, learners and stakeholders are always paramount.

The Executive Leadership team and the board consider the following:

- The consequences of any decision in the long term, including 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, through prompt supplier payments, regular meetings and communication with local authorities, including 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 receives regular updates on stakeholder engagement at its 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 receives 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 operates. 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 first-hand insight into the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups.



Within the 2023–24 year, a key engagement activity with the staff of the charity and the Trust was through the development of a two-year extension of the Time for Ambition strategy. Engagement sessions were run at each of the education settings and with the central support teams, highlighting key internal and external considerations, and inviting feedback to proposed strategy objectives for the periods 2024–25 and 2025–26.

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 13).

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 7 for an update from the Chair of the Youth Council.

## Remuneration policy for key management personnel

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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s financial benchmarking reports for academy schools 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 partnerships. 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 regular 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 2023. (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)

### Energy and carbon consumption

SECR is a legislative reporting requirement that took effect 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	2023–24	1,197,769	n/a	219
	2022–23	402,764	n/a	74
Electricity	2023–24	1,074,348	n/a	223
	2022–23	503,858	n/a	104
Transport	2023–24	118,748	31,501	28
	2022–23	24,427	25,461	6
Total	2023–24	2,390,865	31,501	470
	2022–23	931,049	25,461	184

### 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 441 users emitting on average 0.75kg CO2e each. This is measured annually and compared with previous years to show progress in reducing our carbon intensity.

	2023–24	2022–23
Number of service users	441	324
tCO2e	470	184
Average	1.07	0.57

### 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 2023–24 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 encourage the use of greener transport
- dual waste and recycling facilities now in place at all settings, resulting in a reduction of general waste and disposal cost
- new electricity supply contracts secured for TreeHouse School and The Rise School, providing 100% green renewable energy to our settings
- LED lighting upgrades 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 established to gather views on sustainability from a wide range of stakeholders, with responsibility 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 baseline, in partnership with Acclaro Consult.

We’re 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 fourth year of our extended strategy, we’ll continue to review and further develop our plans, while also exploring new opportunities that contribute to a sustainable future.

The following figures were used to convert energy (kWh) to tCO2e figures:

	Litre		CO2e	
	2023–24	2022–23	2023–24	2022–23
Gas	n/a	n/a	0.18293 tonnes per MWh	0.18293 tonnes per MWh
Electricity	n/a	n/a	0.2071 tonnes per MWh	0.2071 tonnes per MWh
Fuel	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 9.5kWh per litre	Petrol: 0.22013 tonnes per MWh	Petrol: 0.22166 tonnes per MWh
	Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Diesel: 10.5kWh per litre	Diesel: 0.23902 tonnes per MWh	Diesel: 0.23908 tonnes per MWh

### Keeping data safe

We’re 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 nationwide:

- TreeHouse School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- The Rise School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- Spring School supports pupils aged 4–19.
- Ambitious College and St. John’s College both support learners aged 16–25, based on their needs.

Placements for pupils and 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, e.g. 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.

In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives set, and are committed to NCVO's ethical principles.

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## Connected organisations

Ambitious about Autism is an active member of Autism Central, the Autism Education Trust, Autism Alliance, Confederation of School Trusts, British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD), Council for Disabled Children, Disabled Children's Partnership, National Governance Association (NGA), National Association for Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), Natspec, the Special Educational Consortium and the Digital Services 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.

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## Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

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.

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# Trustees, advisers and senior staff

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## 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 2024 was seven. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

### Trustees of Ambitious about Autism

**Neil Goulden**

(Chair, resigned as of 13 December 2024)

**Bob Bishop**

(Chair from 13 December 2024)

**Ian Caplan** (from 8 December 2023)**Michael Clark**

(Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees)

**Andy Forbes**

(Chair of the Education and Care Committee)

**Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia**

(Treasurer, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Chair of the Investment Committee)

**Anna Thatcher** (from 1 September 2023)**Jack Welch**

### Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

**Neil Goulden**

(Chair, resigned as of 13 December 2024)

**Bob Bishop**

(Chair from 13 December 2024)

**Angela Buxton** (from 8 December 2023)**Michael Clark**

(Vice Chair, Chair of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees)

**Mary Fawcett** (from 1 September 2023)**Andy Forbes** (from 19 July 2024)

(Chair of the Education and Care Committee)

**Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia**

(Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee)



## Trustees of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust cont'd

**Joanna Healey** (to 13 December 2024)

**Helen Jeffries**

**Anastasia Klein** (from 22 March 2024)

**Lucy Nutt** (to 19 July 2024)

**Mark O'Kelly**  
(Chair of the Trust Audit Committee)

**Laura Palmer**

## Members of Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust

**Ambitious about Autism**

**Martyn Craddock**

**Andy Forbes** (to 19 July 2024)

**Jack Welch**

**Ian Caplan** (from 19 July 2024)

**Elizabeth Stanton** (from 3 May 2024)

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**

**Dame Tristia Harrison DBE**

**Alex Hatter**

**Richard Hatter**

**Nick Hornby**

**Bruno Paulson**

**Sir Trevor Pears CMG**

**Matthew Punshon**

**Susan Tobbell OBE**

**Graham Tobbell**

**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**

### Expert advisers continued

**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:

**Jon Snow**  
**Sam Holness**  
**Travis George**  
**David Mitchell**

**Kathy Lette**  
**Jules Robertson**  
**Lucy Mottram**  
**Simon Mottram**  
**Hayley Ronson**  
**Luke Treadaway**  
**Niamh Cusack**

### 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)**  
**Sue Adkins**  
**Sally Cairns**  
**Laurie Edmans CBE**  
**Danuta Gray**  
**Matt Hutnell**  
**Alistair MacCallum**  
**Nick Medd**  
**Chris Pond**  
**Katie Vanneck-Smith**

## Executive Leadership team

The trustees delegate day-to-day management of the charity to the Executive Leadership team:

### **Jolanta Lasota**

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

### **Vivienne Berkeley**

Director of Education (to 31 July 2024)

### **Paul Breckell**

Deputy Chief Executive

### **Louise Honeysett**

Director of Finance and Planning,  
and Company Secretary  
(to 14 March 2025)

### **Kate Jenkins**

Interim Director of People and Culture  
(to 28 September 2023)

### **Danae Leaman-Hill**

Director of External Affairs and Development

### **Michael Michaelides**

Director of Property and IT (from 2 October 2023)

### **Mark Ospedale**

Director of People and Culture  
(from 18 September 2023)

### **Helen Spice**

Interim Director of Finance and Planning  
(from 3 March 2025)

### **Claire Thomson**

Interim Director of National Services  
(to 25 January 2024)

### **Paul Van Walwyk**

Director of Education (from 1 August 2024)

## Independent auditor

### **Crowe LLP**

St James House, St James Square,  
Cheltenham, GL50 3PR.

## 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

### **Barclays Bank Plc**

1 Churchill Place, London E14 5HP

## 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



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# 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 and 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.

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## Statement as to disclosure of information to auditor

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 13 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



**Bob Bishop**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

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

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## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ambitious About Autism ('the charitable company') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Consolidated statement of financial activities, Balance sheets, Consolidated statement of cash flows 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 Financial Reporting Standard 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 charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2024 and of the group's 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.

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## 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 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.



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## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the 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 charitable company's or the group'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.

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## Other information

The Trustees' are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. 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 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.

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

In our opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of our 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 strategic report and the directors' report included within the Trustees' report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

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

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the directors' report included within the Trustees' report.

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

- adequate and proper accounting records have not been kept; or
- the 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.

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## 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.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located 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.

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charitable company and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Companies Act 2006, taxation legislation, employment legislation, together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charitable company's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charitable company and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were Ofsted.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees' and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within grant income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Finance and Resources Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, designing audit

procedures over grant income, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission, Ofsted and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing noncompliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

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## 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.



**Guy Biggin**  
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of  
Crowe U.K. LLP  
Statutory Auditor

Date: 14 May 2025



## Consolidated statement of financial activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	For the year ended 31 August 2023	
	Note	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
<b>Income from:</b>						
Donations and legacies:						
Gifts and donated services	2	1,559	1,375	2,934	105	3,039
St. John's donation		11,949	37	11,986	-	11,986
Charitable activities:						
Educational services	3	28,107	275	28,382	8,148	36,530
External Affairs and Development	3	-	40	40	-	40
<b>Other income</b>						
Trading income		282	93	375	143	518
Investment income		207	-	207	-	207
Other income		-	-	-	51	51
<b>Total income</b>		<b>42,104</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>43,924</b>	<b>8,447</b>	<b>52,371</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>						
Raising funds						
Fundraising activities		1,194	-	1,194	-	1,194
Investment management costs		13	-	13	-	13
		1,207	-	1,207	-	1,207
Charitable activities:						
Educational services		28,712	614	29,326	7,066	36,392
External Affairs and Development		1,781	946	2,727	-	2,727
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31,700</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>33,260</b>	<b>7,066</b>	<b>40,326</b>
<b>Net income before other gains/(losses)</b>		<b>10,404</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>10,664</b>	<b>1,381</b>	<b>12,045</b>
Net gains/(losses) on investments		137	-	137	-	137
Net gains/(losses) on pension deficit		-	-	-	(158)	(158)
<b>Net income</b>		<b>10,541</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>10,801</b>	<b>1,223</b>	<b>12,024</b>
Transfers between funds	19	1,250	(251)	999	(999)	0
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>11,791</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11,800</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>12,024</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>						
Total funds brought forward	19	8,666	1,470	10,136	10,892	21,028
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20,457</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>21,936</b>	<b>11,116</b>	<b>33,052</b>

## Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2024

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
<b>Fixed assets:</b>					
Tangible assets	10	19,421	16,181	13,156	10,079
Investments	12	1,833	1,693	1,833	1,693
Intangible assets	11	216	116	198	109
		21,470	17,990	15,187	11,881
<b>Current assets:</b>					
Debtors	13	13,553	8,646	9,462	6,340
Assets held for sale	13a	5,420	-	5,420	-
Cash at bank and in hand		5,004	5,696	4,272	1,809
Short-term deposits		5,603	2,013	2,064	1,008
		29,580	16,355	21,218	9,157
<b>Liabilities:</b>					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14,15	(14,225)	(9,191)	(10,696)	(6,745)
<b>Net current assets</b>		15,355	7,164	10,522	2,412
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		36,825	25,154	25,709	14,293
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	16	(3,773)	(4,157)	(3,773)	(4,157)
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/(liability)	17	-	31	-	-
<b>Total net assets</b>	18	33,052	21,028	21,936	10,136


## Balance sheets

As at 31 August 2024

Company number: 03375255

		Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	Note	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
<b>Funds</b>					
Restricted funds:					
Ambitious about Autism		1,479	1,470	1,479	1,470
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust		11,116	10,892	-	-
<b>Total restricted funds</b>		<b>12,595</b>	<b>12,362</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>1,470</b>
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds		17,371	5,890	17,371	5,890
General funds		3,086	2,776	3,086	2,776
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>		<b>20,457</b>	<b>8,666</b>	<b>20,457</b>	<b>8,666</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33,052</b>	<b>21,028</b>	<b>21,936</b>	<b>10,136</b>

The financial statements on pages 70 to 73 were approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 13 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by



**Bob Bishop**

Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 74 to 101 form an integral part of these financial statements.



## Consolidated statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2024

		For the year ended 31 August 2024		For the year ended 31 August 2023	
	Note	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>					
Net cash used in operating activities	20		5,008		(219)
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>					
Dividends and interest from investments		207		204	
Interest payable		(305)		(235)	
Purchase of tangible and intangible fixed assets		(1,771)		(696)	
Proceed from sale of tangible fixed asset		975		6	
Proceeds from the sale of investments		389		482	
Change on cash held for investment		(52)		(12)	
Purchase of investments		(436)		(538)	
<b>Net cash (used in) investing activities</b>			(993)		(789)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>					
Repayment of St. John's Loans		(733)		-	
Repayments of borrowing		(384)		(544)	
<b>Net cash (used in) financing activities</b>			(1,117)		(544)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents</b>			2,898		(1,552)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			7,709		9,261
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>			10,607		7,709
<b>Cash and cash equivalents consists of:</b>					
Cash at bank and in hand			5,004		5,696
Short-term deposits			5,603		2,013
			10,607		7,709

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2024

### 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) the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

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 AaAST. 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 2024 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.

Net income of £12,024,000 (2023: 956,000) was attributable to the charity for the year. The charity has also taken advantage of the exemption available to a qualifying entity in FRS 102 from the requirement to present a charity only Statement of Cash Flows and certain disclosures about the charity's Financial instruments within the consolidated financial statements.

No separate Statement of Financial Activities ("SOFA") has been prepared for the charity alone as permitted by Section 408 of the Companies Act 2006.

#### 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.

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 soon as services are rendered and Ambitious about Autism defers any income until the criteria has been 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 income 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 as well as investment fees.

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 2024

### 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. Both land and assets under construction are not depreciated.

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	10-50 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
- 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.



# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2024

Ambitious about Autism holds a derivative in the form of an interest rate cap which provides protection against rising interest rates. This cap which is set at 4% requires an upfront premium payment, which is paid quarterly. 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.

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 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 impairment to 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.
- **Interest Rate Cap:** the financial impact on Ambitious about Autism varies with market volatility.

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 2. Income from donations and legacies

##### For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	Total £'000
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	
Gifts	1,503	1,375	2,878	105	2,983
Donated services	56	-	56	-	56
	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,375</b>	<b>2,934</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>3,039</b>

##### 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>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 3. Income from charitable activities

##### For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
Local authorities	24,575	-	24,575	5,944	30,519
Education Skills Funding Agency	3,532	275	3,807	2,204	6,011
<b>Sub-total for educational services</b>	<b>28,107</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>28,382</b>	<b>8,148</b>	<b>36,530</b>
Autism Education Trust	-	40	40	-	40
<b>Sub-total for External Affairs and Development</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Total income from charitable activities</b>	<b>28,107</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>28,422</b>	<b>8,148</b>	<b>36,570</b>

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

	Ambitious about Autism			Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Subtotal £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'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 and Development</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>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 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 2024 £'000
Ambitious about Autism:										
Cost of generating funds	641	370	-	-	-	30	-	135	18	1,194
Educational services	17,132	1,969	152	-	116	1,282	-	8,175	513	29,339
External affairs	1,740	431	3	-	-	58	-	440	55	2,727
<b>Ambitious about Autism</b>	<b>19,513</b>	<b>2,770</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>1,370</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8,750</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>33,260</b>
Support costs	3,530	926	1,084	907	366	1,902	35	(8,750)	-	-
Governance costs	447	73	-	-	-	-	66	-	(586)	-
<b>Allocated costs</b>	<b>3,977</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>907</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>1,902</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>(8,750)</b>	<b>(586)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism sub-total</b>	<b>23,490</b>	<b>3,769</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>907</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>3,272</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,260</b>
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	5,402	939	-	-	-	725	-	-	-	7,066
<b>Total expenditure 2024</b>	<b>28,892</b>	<b>4,708</b>	<b>1,239</b>	<b>907</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>3,997</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40,326</b>

Expenditure is 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 2024

#### 5. Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Depreciation	1,134	847
Amortisation	61	54
Derivative Liability	-	-
Interest payable	305	235
Auditor's remuneration:		
Ambitious about Autism	38	58
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	25	23
Ambitious about Autism Teachers Pension audit	7	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Annual accounts return	-	2
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust Teachers Pension audit	6	1
Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust other services	-	3
Ambitious about Autism other services	3	5
Payments under operating leases:		
Property	142	137
Equipment	18	22

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 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 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
Salaries and wages	24,590	16,137
Social security costs	2,356	1,605
Employer's contribution to defined benefit pension schemes	1,395	1,029
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	551	350
	<b>28,892</b>	<b>19,121</b>

The 2024 figures for AaAST 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 £84k were paid in the year (2023: £86k).

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension and National Insurance costs) during the year to 31 August 2024, between:

	For the year ended 31 August 2024 £'000	For the year ended 31 August 2023 £'000
£60,000–£69,999	9	11
£70,000–£79,999	8	6
£80,000–£89,999	3	3
£90,000–£99,999	6	3
£100,000–£109,999	2	0
£110,000–£119,999	2	2
£120,000–£129,999	1	0
£130,000–£139,999	0	1

The total employee benefits including Employer pension and national insurance contributions of the key management personnel were £1,069k for the 12 month period to 31 August 2024 (2023: £915k). Please see page 63 for key management personnel.

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious about Autism, was paid an annual salary of £99k to 31 August 2024 (2023: £119k).

The charity trustees were not paid and did not receive any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2024: £nil). No charity trustee received any payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2023: £nil).

A trustee made an expense claim of £2,627 for accommodation costs in 2024 (2023: £499).

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 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 2024 No.	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No.
Raising funds	12	7
Educational services	639	405
External affairs	42	37
Support	84	64
	<b>777</b>	<b>513</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 2024 No.	For the year ended 31 August 2023 No.
Raising funds	11	7
Educational services	574	372
External affairs	40	34
Support	71	58
	<b>696</b>	<b>471</b>

#### 8. Related party transactions

During the year trustees either personally donated or donated through entities where they have significant control a total of £18,038 (2023: £18,488) to the charity. Of these, no gifts (2023: nil) were restricted donations.

Services were provided to AaAST at a cost of £999k from September 2023 to August 2024 (2023: £910k). These services include Governance, 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 £39k (2023: £194k) 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 2024

### 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	11,966	6,727	1,738	1,519	1,526	269	23,745
Transfer in	3,631	-	-	-	105	178	3,914
Additions	171	171	205	580	424	59	1,610
Disposals	(951)	-	-	-	-	(24)	(975)
At the end of the year	14,817	6,898	1,943	2,099	2,055	482	28,294
<b>Depreciation</b>							
At the start of the year	3,532	993	1,112	668	1,146	113	7,564
Transfer in	-	-	-	-	73	126	199
Charge	294	143	211	153	257	76	1,134
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	(24)	(24)
At the end of the year	3,826	1,136	1,323	821	1,476	291	8,873
<b>Net book value</b>	10,991	5,762	620	1,278	579	191	19,421
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>10,991</b>	<b>5,762</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>19,421</b>
<b>At the start 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>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 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	11,966	1,590	1,257	1,144	269	16,226
Transfer in	3,631	-	-	105	178	3,914
Additions	171	205	521	262	-	1,159
Disposals	(951)	-	-	-	(24)	(975)
At the end of the year	14,817	1,795	1,778	1,511	423	20,324
<b>Depreciation</b>						
At the start of the year	3,532	1,052	530	920	113	6,147
Transfer in	-	-	-	73	126	199
Charge	294	197	121	158	76	846
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(24)	(24)
At the end of the year	3,826	1,249	651	1,151	291	7,168
<b>Net book value</b>	10,991	546	1,127	360	132	13,156
<b>At the end of the year</b>	<b>10,991</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>13,156</b>
<b>At the start of the year</b>	<b>8,434</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>10,079</b>

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 2024

#### 11. Intangible fixed assets

Group	Computer software £'000	Assets under construction £'000	Total £'000
<b>Cost</b>			
At the start of the period	256	18	<b>274</b>
Transfer	18	(18)	-
Additions in the period	51	110	<b>161</b>
At the end of the period	325	110	<b>435</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At the start of the period	158	-	<b>158</b>
Transfer	-	-	-
Charge for the period	61	-	<b>61</b>
At the end of the period	219	-	<b>219</b>
<b>Net book value</b>	106	110	<b>216</b>
<b>At the end of the period</b>	106	110	<b>216</b>
<b>At the start of the period</b>	98	18	<b>116</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	246	18	<b>264</b>
Transfer	18	(18)	-
Additions in the period	30	110	<b>140</b>
At the end of the period	294	110	<b>404</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At the start of the period	155	-	<b>155</b>
Transfer	-	-	-
Charge for the period	51	-	<b>51</b>
At the end of the period	206	-	<b>206</b>
<b>Net book value</b>	88	110	<b>198</b>
<b>At the end of the period</b>	88	110	<b>198</b>
<b>At the start of the period</b>	91	18	<b>109</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 12. Investments

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Market value at the start of the year	1,608	1,689
Additions at cost	444	538
Disposal proceeds	(389)	(482)
Net gain / (loss) on change in fair value	137	(137)
Market value at the end of the year	1,800	1,608
Cash held in investments	33	85
<b>Total investments held</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,693</b>

Investments comprise	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
<b>Listed securities</b>		
Fixed interest	284	281
Direct UK equities	439	553
Direct overseas equities	874	530
Alternatives - property and managed funds	203	244
Cash held for re-investment	26	79
Cash	7	6
<b>Market value at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,693</b>

The historical cost of investments is £1642k (2023: £1,652k).

	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
13. Debtors	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Trade debtors	11,507	7,346	8,434	5,315
Amounts owed by group undertakings	-	-	-	194
Other debtors	950	381	101	87
Prepayments	354	607	332	432
Accrued income	742	312	595	312
	<b>13,553</b>	<b>8,646</b>	<b>9,462</b>	<b>6,340</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

13a. Assets Held for Sale	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Framfield Old	817	-	817	-
Framfield New	103	-	103	-
Seaford	4500	-	4500	-
	5,420	-	5,420	-

14. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Bank loans	409	391	409	391
Amounts owed to group undertakings	-	-	39	-
Trade creditors	737	506	343	391
Taxation and social security	617	481	531	389
Other creditors	933	189	926	111
Accruals	897	683	760	487
Deferred income (note 15)	10,632	6,941	7,688	4,976
	14,225	9,191	10,696	6,745

15. Deferred income	Group		Ambitious about Autism	
	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Balance at the beginning of the year	6,941	1,602	4,976	1,401
Amount released to income in the year	(6,941)	(1,602)	(4,976)	(1,401)
Amount deferred in the year	10,632	6,941	7,688	4,976
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>10,632</b>	<b>6,941</b>	<b>7,688</b>	<b>4,976</b>

Deferred income as at 31 August 2024 relates to autumn 2024 term fees that were invoiced in advance of the new academic year.



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

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

Group and Ambitious about Autism	31 August 2024 £'000	31 August 2023 £'000
Loans to finance the freehold property	2,790	3,102
Loan to finance Ambitious College	909	1,006
Derivative Liability	74	49
<b>Balance at the end of the year</b>	<b>3,773</b>	<b>4,157</b>

The charity has a loan from Social Investment Business 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 Nat West loan is secured over the freehold land and buildings at Woodside Avenue. The Rathbones loan is secured over the investments.

The charity is using an interest rate cap 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 cap in February 2011. The option caps the variable rate of interest at a rate of 4% per annum for the period up to August 2033.

The capital amounts repayable under each loan are:	Within 1 year £'000	2–5 years £'000	Over 5 years £'000
Futurebuilders	244	835	892
NatWest £1.1m tranche	57	245	344
NatWest £1.9m tranche	97	403	506
NatWest £500k	11	51	373
Rathbones £500k	-	50	-
	<b>409</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>2,115</b>

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 August 2024

17. Pension schemes

Ambitious about Autism makes contributions to the Aegon Pension Scheme, NEST, 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 £1,946k (2023: £1,379k).

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 AaA in the year amounted to £469k (2023: £350k).

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS by AaAST in the year amounted to £467k (2023: £254k).

60 AaA employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 21).

31 AST employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 26).

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 2024 were £574k (2023: £412k), of which employer's contributions totalled £443k (2023: £334k) and employees' contributions totalled £131k (2023: £78k). Contribution rates for employees increase with salary and during the year ended 31 August 2024, the average employer contribution rate was 22.1% (2023 : 22.1%) for the Rise School and 21.0% for Spring School, and for employees a minimum of 5.5% to a maximum of 12.5% of pensionable salary. During the year ended 31 August 2024 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.

98 employees were members of the scheme at 31 August 2024 (2023: 64), for both schools.

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2019 updated to 31 August 2024 by a qualified independent actuary, for the Rise School only (this analysis is not available for Spring School).

Principal actuarial assumptions	At 31 August 2024	At 31 August 2023
Rate of increase in salaries	3.80%	3.90%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/ inflation	2.80%	2.90%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.15%	5.25%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.80%	2.90%
Commutation of pensions to lump sums	50.00%	50.00%

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2024

### 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	2,273	2,344	2,418
Projected service cost	196	205	214
<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	2,345	2,344	2,343
Projected service cost	205	205	205
<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	2,418	2,344	2,272
Projected service cost	215	205	196
<b>Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions</b>	<b>+ 1 Year</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>- 1 Year</b>
Present value of total obligation	2,405	2,344	2,285
Projected service cost	213	205	198

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 2024 £'000	At 31 August 2023 £'000
<b>Retiring today</b>		
Males	20.7	20.7
Females	23.3	23.2
<b>Retiring in 20 years</b>		
Males	22.0	22.0
Females	24.7	24.6

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

The estimated asset allocation for the Rise School as at 31 August 2024 is as follows:

Employer asset share – bid value	At 31 August 2024		At 31 August 2023	
	£'000	%	£'000	%
<b>Equities</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>64%</b>
Fixed income	745	28%	518	26%
Infrastructure	51	2%	34	2%
Property	101	4%	85	4%
Cash	91	3%	77	4%
<b>Total market value of assets</b>	<b>2,681</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,002</b>	<b>100%</b>
Present value of scheme liabilities - funded	(2,344)		(1,971)	
Restrictions on recoverable surplus	(337)		-	
<b>Asset/(deficit) in the scheme</b>	<b>-</b>		<b>31</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 2024	31 August 2023
	£'000	£'000
Current service cost (including employee contributions)	(205)	(322)
Net interest cost	11	(5)
Administration	(3)	(3)
<b>Total operating charge</b>	<b>(197)</b>	<b>(330)</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 17. Pension schemes (continued)

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
<b>Changes in the present value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:</b>		
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>1,971</b>	<b>2,094</b>
Current service cost	205	322
Interest cost	105	90
Actuarial (gain)	(14)	(653)
Benefits paid	(16)	29
Employee contributions	93	89
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>2,344</b>	<b>1,971</b>

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
<b>Changes in the fair value of the academy's share of scheme assets:</b>		
<b>At 1 September</b>	<b>2,002</b>	<b>1,810</b>
Interest on assets	116	85
Return on plan assets (excluding net interest on the defined pension liability)	161	(59)
Other actuarial losses	-	(283)
Employer contributions	328	334
Employee contributions	93	89
Administration expenses	(3)	(3)
Benefits paid	(16)	29
<b>At 31 August</b>	<b>2,681</b>	<b>2,002</b>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2024

### 18. Analysis of net assets between funds

Fund balances as at 31 August 2024 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	-	13,156	-	6,265	19,421
Investments	1,833	-	-	-	1,833
Intangible fixed assets	-	198	-	18	216
Net current assets	1,253	7,790	1,479	4,833	15,355
Long term liabilities	-	(3,773)	-	-	(3,773)
	3,086	17,371	1,479	11,116	33,052

Ambitious about Autism	General unrestricted £'000	Designated £'000	Restricted £'000	Total funds £'000
Tangible fixed assets	-	13,156	-	13,156
Investments	1,833	-	-	1,833
Intangible fixed assets	-	198	-	198
Net current assets	1,253	7,790	1,479	10,522
Long term liabilities	-	(3,773)	-	(3,773)
	3,086	17,371	1,479	21,936

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

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

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 2024

#### 19a. Movement in funds

	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 2024:					
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	353	278	(247)	(175)	209
St. John's	0	89	(14)	0	75
Education Services projects	331	749	(459)	(57)	564
Autism Exchange	130	0	0	0	130
Family Support	204	81	(146)	0	139
Participation	155	359	(442)	0	72
TreeHouse School	109	235	(147)	(19)	178
Online Youth Support	98	12	(86)	0	24
IT Equipment	28	18	(20)	0	26
Other	62	0	0	0	62
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism restricted funds</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>1,821</b>	<b>(1,561)</b>	<b>(251)</b>	<b>1,479</b>
b) Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust	10,892	8,447	(7,224)	(999)	11,116
<b>Total group restricted funds</b>	<b>12,362</b>	<b>10,268</b>	<b>(8,785)</b>	<b>(1,250)</b>	<b>12,595</b>
<b>Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds:</b>					
<b>Designated funds</b>					
Fixed assets	3,683	4,060	(683)	4,306	11,366
School development	5	0	0	(5)	0
Transformation fund	885	0	(60)	(825)	(0)
Covid Recovery fund	483	0	0	(298)	185
Service Development	78	0	0	4,836	4,914
St. John's Designated Fund	0	145	0	(145)	0
Buildings Maintenance and Development fund	756	0	0	150	906
<b>Total designated funds</b>	<b>5,890</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>(743)</b>	<b>8,019</b>	<b>17,371</b>
General funds	2,776	38,036	(30,957)	(6,769)	3,086
<b>Total Ambitious about Autism unrestricted funds</b>	<b>8,666</b>	<b>42,241</b>	<b>(31,700)</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>20,457</b>
<b>Total group funds</b>	<b>21,028</b>	<b>52,509</b>	<b>(40,485)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33,052</b>

#### Transfers

£1.3k has been designated to the Fixed Asset funds to cover the depreciation of fixed assets acquired during the year. This includes £194k of fixed assets funded from restricted income, £87k funded from the Transformation fund and £1.017k of fixed assets funded from unrestricted funds. A further £3m has been transferred to the Fixed Asset fund to support the depreciation of fixed assets in the future.

£4.8m has been designated to the Service Development fund to consolidate designated funds to support known development.

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

£999k was transferred from AaAST to general funds to reflect the intercompany management charge.

The charity is using an interest rate cap 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 cap in February 2011. The option replaces 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 2024

#### 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 2023:					
<b>Restricted funds:</b>					
a) Ambitious about Autism					
Ambitious College	75	498	(220)	0	353
Education Services projects	348	619	(585)	(51)	331
Autism Exchange	147	-	(17)	0	130
Family Support	248	112	(156)	0	204
Participation	48	428	(321)	0	155
TreeHouse School	54	382	(187)	(140)	109
Online Information Support	84	100	(86)	0	98
Online Youth Support	69	15	(51)	(5)	28
IT Equipment	13	49	-	0	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	-	-	0	5
Transformation fund	1,102	-	(217)	0	885
Covid Recovery fund	492	-	(9)	0	483
Service Development	199	-	(121)	0	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>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 August 2024

### 19b. Summary movement in funds

#### Purpose of restricted funds:

<b>Ambitious College</b>	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 three campuses co-located within the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, West Thames College and Supported Internship based at Whittington Hospital.
<b>Education Services projects</b>	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.
<b>Employ Autism and Autism Exchange</b>	Employ Autism's mission is to ensure that more autistic young 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.
<b>Learner and Family Support</b>	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.
<b>Youth participation</b>	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.

**TreeHouse School** Funding provided to support a range of specific activities across the school.

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

#### Purpose of designated funds:

<b>Fixed Assets</b>	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.
<b>Schools development</b>	This fund was established to fund school development.
<b>Transformation fund</b>	This fund was established to support the organisation's previous strategy.
<b>Buildings maintenance and development fund</b>	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.
<b>Covid Recovery fund</b>	This fund has been established to support the organisation in managing the risks and impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
<b>Service development</b>	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 2024

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

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net income	12,024	956
Less St John's Donation	(7,317)	-
St John Cash	1,292	-
Depreciation and amortisation charges	1,195	901
(Gains)/losses on investments	(137)	137
(Gain) on sale of fixed assets	-	(6)
(Gain) on Current assets	(4,060)	-
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(207)	(181)
Interest payable	305	235
(Increase) in debtors	(4,907)	(7,433)
St John Debtors as at 2023	5,267	-
(Decrease) in derivative liability	25	(25)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	5,016	5,512
St John Creditors as at 2023	(3,645)	-
(Increase) / Decrease in pension fund	158	(315)
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>	<b>5,008</b>	<b>(219)</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	
	2024 £'000	2023 £'000	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Less than one year	143	142	10	21
One to five years	317	412	4	11
Over five years	-	42	-	-
	460	596	14	32

#### 22. St. John's School and College Merger

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, and on 1 October the net assets and operations of St. John's School and College were transferred in full to the Ambitious about Autism charity. Reflected in the accounts are net assets of £12m (being the value of the donated assets). Trading results for the twelve months from 1 September 2023 have also been reflected in the overall income and expenditure categories. St. John's School and College was dissolved on 31 December 2024.

#### 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 2024

#### 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.

Balance sheet	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	6,265	6,102
Intangible assets	18	7
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	4,130	2,500
Cash at bank and in hand	3,539	1,005
Short-term deposit	732	3,887
	<b>8,401</b>	<b>7,392</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(3,568)	(2,640)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>4,833</b>	<b>4,752</b>
<b>Net assets excluding pension liability</b>	<b>11,116</b>	<b>10,861</b>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	-	31
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>11,116</b>	<b>10,892</b>
<b>Funds of the Academy Trust:</b>		
<b>Restricted funds</b>		
Fixed asset fund	6,449	6,263
Restricted income fund	4,667	4,598
Pension Reserve	-	31
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>11,116</b>	<b>10,892</b>
<b>Unrestricted income funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>11,116</b>	<b>10,892</b>



## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

#### 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	-	47	58	105
Charitable activities	-	7,999	149	8,148
Other income	-	194	-	194
	-	8,240	207	8,447
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	-	(7,767)	(298)	(8,065)
Net surplus/(deficit)	-	473	(91)	382
Transfer Between Funds	-	(277)	277	-
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	-	(158)	-	(158)
Net movement in funds	-	38	186	224
<b>Funds brought forward</b>	-	4,629	6,263	10,892
<b>Funds carried forward</b>	-	4,667	6,449	11,116

## Notes to the financial statements

### For the year ended 31 August 2024

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

For the year ended 31 August 2023

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

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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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