

**Working at John Grant School**

Thank you for showing an interest in working at John Grant School. Our school motto is…

**“Working together to be the best we can be”**

As a result all who work for, and with us, play an important part in what we do, whether it is as a cleaner, learning support, medical/therapy support, site team, admin support or senior leader (and this is by no means an exclusive list!). Each person therefore has a key role and all we ask is that everyone understands that our core aim is to work together to meet the high and complex needs of our pupils. They are, and should be, at the centre of all we do.

In October 2017, Ofsted judged our school to be “Outstanding” in all areas, and I believe this is the best possible reflection of our motto in action.

I hope you will have looked at our website – although not perfect it does give an overview of our work and facilities, which may well be helpful. Find us at:

[www.johngrant.norfolk.sch.uk](http://www.johngrant.norfolk.sch.uk) .

As I have written on the website:

At John Grant School, we always endeavour to put the many, varied and complex needs of our pupils first. As a result we retain a very flexible approach to school organisation looking each year at what will work best for the pupils. Overall our class bases are broadly organised by age into key stages, but within this we have introduced more needs led groupings incorporating the very particular teaching strategies and pace of learning that will enable the pupils to make the best possible progress. More traditional “academic” progress is very important to us and at the moment we continue to use the P Levels and National Curriculum levels to track this; but we also value the progress that our pupils make in areas like social skills, independence, behaviour, decision making and communication in its broadest sense. With regard to the latter we encourage pupils to use whichever individual or combination of communication strategies that suit them best; whether this be speech, signing, PECS, Objects of reference, gesture, facial expression or electronic communication aid.

Although we have what, by main stream standards, is a small number of pupils – currently 141; we do need a lot of people to support them in both their care and learning. The number of staff is therefore over 100, if you include all the bus drivers and escorts who bring our pupils to and from school each day. It can be difficult to ensure that good communication is always maintained, but we do work hard at this with daily, morning briefing meetings and regular separate meetings for almost all the teams of people who work in the school. Communication is a two way process and we hope these meeting not only enable leaders to communicate with staff, but also staff to have a voice in the operation of the school. I should also note that it is important that our pupils have a voice and to that end we have a school council that meets at least half termly to raise and discuss issues – at times (particularly for senior appointments) our school council is also given an involvement in our interview processes.

We aspire for our school to be a “learning community”, not just for our pupils, but for all who work here. I have worked in special education for over 35 years and I still find new aspects of our work to discover, or developments to learn about, on a daily basis. We aim to include all in the range of continuing professional development opportunities we provide, whether this is attendance at more formal sessions or courses on or off site; or the more informal learning that occurs through collaboration with colleagues. We have strong links with all the other complex needs schools in Norfolk and benefit from having access to their collective range of expertise and knowledge. We therefore hope that all who join us will share our view that there is always something new to learn.

Working with pupils who have very complex needs can be a challenging experience. Some pupils can communicate their need or distress in ways that are difficult or dangerous for others. Some pupils have very high medical needs that require skilled input and support. Sadly at times as a school community we have to face loss, as a number of our pupils have life limiting conditions. One of the bonus’ for me is that because of our high staff ratios, we can become closely involved with our pupils’ families/carers, and work with them to get through some of the difficult and challenging times they face. All of this can take an emotional toll, and so it is vital that we support each other. Working at a school like John Grant is therefore not for everybody. I always say that 95% of the qualification to work here is: wanting to be here; feeling comfortable and confident around our pupils; having that desire to constantly put them first; an ability to explore flexible and creative solutions to the issues we face: and last but not least… a good sense of humour!

If, having read all this, you are still thinking that John Grant School is somewhere that you would like to work; please complete the application form explaining why you think you will be suitable for the post, and I will be looking forward to reading it. If you have time and would like to visit the school prior to making an application, please contact the school office to organise this on 01493 720158.

Pam Ashworth

Headteacher