



NASS

National Association
of Special Schools

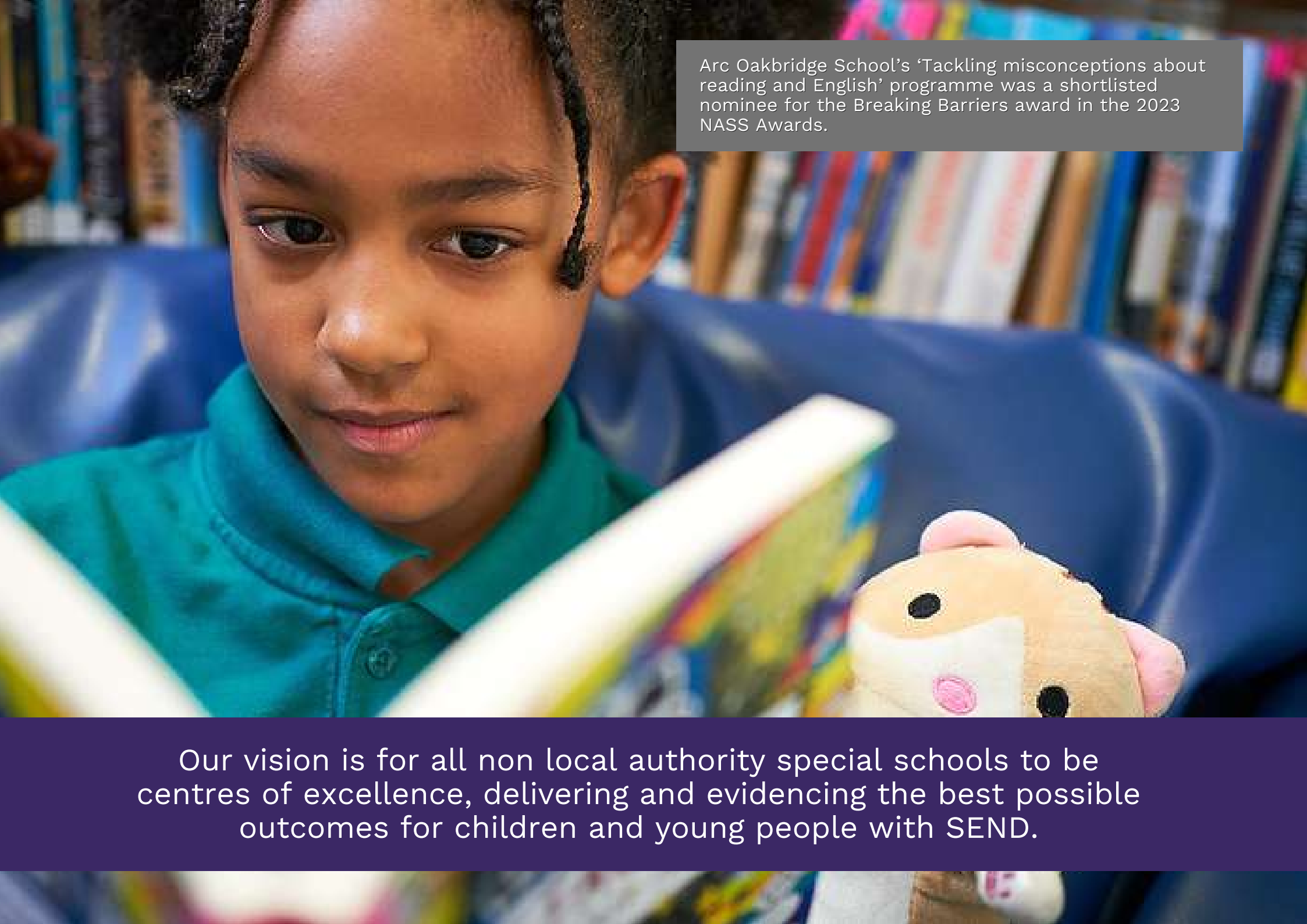
Belong here

Our 2023 Impact Report



✓ Be informed ✓ Be recognised ✓ Be represented

Belong at nassschools.org.uk



Arc Oakbridge School's 'Tackling misconceptions about reading and English' programme was a shortlisted nominee for the Breaking Barriers award in the 2023 NASS Awards.

Our vision is for all non local authority special schools to be centres of excellence, delivering and evidencing the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Welcome

2023 was a year of change. We saw the introduction of the DfE's SEND Change programme and NASS itself underwent a major makeover to change its appearance to better reflect its role.

In the midst of change and uncertainty, NASS has sought to ensure that it

remains constant in providing a trusted source of support and guidance for our member schools. It is always a privilege to be trusted with helping you think about challenges that you face – individually and collectively. Whilst our high-profile work often focuses on 'big picture' issues, such as SEND

system reform, a huge amount of NASS's day-to-day work involves responding to member queries via email and telephone. This contact is a vital means of informing us on how best to represent your interests on the wider stage.

On that wider stage, we have not been short of meetings to attend with DfE, Ofsted and others! The link between meetings and impacts is often tenuous at best but holding a seat round the table gives us the best possible chance of having an impact on policy

development. Gains tend to be small and slow but it has been heartening to see the 'Stable Homes' team at DfE gradually recognise the need to better include SEND settings in their thinking.

We are hoping for a similarly busy year in 2024 and, in a good way, hope you will continue to generate lots of stimulating and challenging work for us!



Claire Dorer
CEO, NASS

Did you know?

In 2024 NASS is celebrating its 25th birthday. We were established in 1999 by a group of non-maintained special schools to champion and be a strong voice for non local authority maintained special schools.



CELEBRATING
25 years of
service &
support



Delegates at our 2023 NASS Conference in Birmingham

Belong here

NASS is a membership organisation representing special schools in England and Wales providing support, advice, information, events, training, and a strong voice for non-maintained special schools.

NASS helps to support and shape the provision of this vital special education, placing the choices of children, their families, and carers at the heart of our education system.



NASS has **400+** members across England and Wales.



NASS organises a wide range of tailored training opportunities for special schools, brings the NASS community together at its annual conference and hosts termly special interest groups.



NASS offers its members expert guidance and advocacy at national and local levels.



NASS promotes sharing of best practice between schools and leads on insightful campaigns and research initiatives.

Our vision

For all non local authority special schools to be centres of excellence, delivering and evidencing the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Our mission

- We **inform and support** our members, enabling them to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- We **represent** our members, influencing policy and practice as the voice of non local authority special schools.
- We **research and share** approaches that deliver positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Hopedale School's staff recruitment, retention and training programme won the Outstanding Impact award in the 2023 NASS Awards.



A new look

After nearly 25 years of the apple logo, we refreshed our look to one which more accurately reflects our position as a well-established, professional organisation and the valuable work we do to support our members.

In all our work, we try to promote a real sense of belonging. Our members tell us that this is one of the most important things that they gain from being part of NASS. Our new logo and strapline reflects that sense of coming together – of different component parts making a stronger whole.

- ✓ Be informed
- ✓ Be recognised
- ✓ Be represented

Belong at nassschools.org.uk



Informing you

From funding pressures to failed reforms, worries over staff wellbeing to worsening recruitment and retention, the special school sector is awash with complex and contentious issues. There's also no shortage of organisations, groups, and experts sharing information and vying to be heard.

An essential part of what we do is scrutinise and disseminate pertinent information to our members. The NASS team achieves this through various means, including our bi-weekly NASS News, policy briefings, blogs, and email updates, reaching an audience of over 1,130 staff in our member schools.

We are readily available to provide guidance to our members, answering on average 15 calls and emails per day from our membership.

Keeping our members abreast of the latest guidance, we create a varied and relevant calendar of training and events. In 2023, our topics ranged from legal guidance over fee setting and payment, safeguarding training to investigating allegations of professional abuse.

Our termly special interest groups provide a valuable platform for specific

disciplines to network, discuss challenges, hear from guest speakers, and share experiences and best practices. In 2023, we hosted 13 virtual and in-person meetings, drawing attendance from 288 members.

Our two-day annual conference brings the NASS community together. 143 delegates joined us in Birmingham in 2023. Our packed agenda covered a range of topics including social care and Ofsted updates, effective leadership, SEND reforms and the law, staff wellbeing and online safety for pupils.



Did you know?

In 2023, we sent out 23 fortnightly NASS News to members in addition to regular updates and 'on the day' briefings for issues such as social care and SEND reforms.

Recognising you

Central to our mission is for special schools to be centres of excellence, delivering and evidencing the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

NASS takes pride in recognising, enabling and sharing excellence from across our membership.

Through our website and social media channels, we regularly seek to showcase accomplishments and stories that demonstrate the difference special schools are making in the lives of the children and young people they support.

Additionally, since 2006 our annual NASS awards give

us the opportunity to celebrate the remarkable work and impact of our members with our three award categories - Breaking Barriers, Innovation and Outstanding Impact.

We help our members develop and become centres of excellence through bespoke leadership programmes for special schools. In 2023, we partnered with Caboodle Education, The Mulberry Bush Organisation and Dialogue to run four programmes that supported 31 new heads, aspiring leaders, school improvement and social care leadership.

The positive impact of special schools in meeting the complex, individual needs of its learners is regularly overshadowed by negative narratives focused on the short-term, higher funding costs. The lasting benefits to children and young people, their families, and society as a whole are often overlooked or undervalued. In 2023 we took action and commissioned Sonnet Impact to research and evidence the value of SEND provision. 'Reaching my Potential' was published in June; we continue to use the findings as a vital tool in demonstrating the value of special schools with key stakeholders.



Congratulations to all the winners and shortlisted nominees in the 2023 NASS Awards.

Breaking Barriers winner: Treloar School
Innovation winner: West Kirby School
Outstanding Impact winner: The Hopedale Group

Representing you

NASS is dedicated to ensuring that special schools receive proper representation and have a strong voice where it matters.

We respond to all key government consultations, ensuring that the views and concerns of our members are not only raised but also heard.

We are recognised by both the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted as the key sector body. In 2023, we spoke at least monthly to the DfE team on key issues and are often their first port of call for advice or for seeking information about the sector, including being part of DfE's Care Standards Reference group.



In 2023, we pushed for change on behalf of members and the sector. This included liaising with DfE and the Cabinet Office on the Procurement Bill (now Act) to influence the decision to put services with user choice outside the new procurement regulations. We also influenced DfE to include independent schools in their flexible working in schools programme.

In response to the Stable Homes – Built on Love consultation in February 2023, we pushed for inclusion of residential special schools in children's social care workforce survey. We are also working

with DfE to ensure SEND is considered in Regional Care Co-operatives.

Following our 'on the day' and detailed briefings to members in March on the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, we have had regular meetings with DfE on a range of Improvement Plan topics such as National Standards, regional commissioning and EHC plan guidance.

NASS is also represented on all key working groups and forums, including the Special Education Consortium and the National SEND Forum.

Did you know?

In 2023, NASS submitted responses to 7 Government consultations on behalf of our membership. We looked to influence policy and practice through regular discussions with DfE, including attending 3 ministerial roundtables.

School for Inspiring Talents was shortlisted for the Outstanding Impact award in the 2023 NASS Awards for 'Maintaining excellence and growth'.



2023 achievements

Informed, recognised and represented you



3 ministerial roundtables attended with the opportunity to represent NASS membership.



12 policy briefings covering issues such as RAAC, industrial action and teacher strikes, and, following a Supreme Court ruling, annual leave for part-year / irregular hours workers.



20+ letters to MPs and local authorities on issues including Change Programme pilots and the inclusion of Independent Special Schools from the removal of charity status and VAT exemption.



2 webinars for NASS members on:

- SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan
- Commissioned legal advice on setting and recouping fees



7 consultation responses including Stable Homes – Built on Love (Feb), Working Together to Safeguard Children (Sept) and Ofsted's post-inspection arrangements and complaints handling (Sept)



23 editions of NASS News sent fortnightly to **1,130+** staff in NASS membership.

2023 achievements

969 members attended 40+ workshops, events, training and leadership programmes



Supported **31 leaders** through **4 NASS sponsored programmes**



We ran the third cohort of education Leadership Programme with Caboodle Education



We supported the third School Improvement (SIP) Training programme, run by The Mulberry Bush Organisation



Launched the inaugural cohort of the Social Care Leadership Programme with Dialogue



Supported the first cohort of the Nurturing New Heads programme, run by The Mulberry Bush Organisation



The NASS team presented at **4 group member annual head teacher events**



We held **13 Special Interest Group** meetings (online and in person)

- HR & Finance
- Heads of Care
- Teaching and Learning
- Academies
- Clinical Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists



328 members took part in **18 training events**

143 delegates joined us in Birmingham for the **annual NASS Conference**

2 recruitment and retention strategy workshops

1 joint one-day **conference with SAPHNA**

2023 achievements

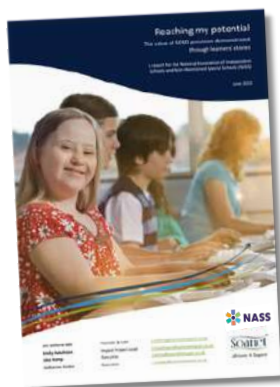
Created vital new knowledge and resources

Demonstrating value

Launch of 'Reaching My Potential' report on cost and value in June – commissioned from Sonnet Impact.

Key finding being that if you effectively meet children's and young people's needs, they can, and do, achieve great outcomes in adulthood.

Our study suggested an average return across a lifetime of £380k per learner in value to individuals, their families and wider society. And that's a return that goes beyond the money spent on their childhood provision.



Wellbeing pilot

Completion of pilot programme with Education Support exploring embedding staff wellbeing.



The action learning set model was found to be effective and NASS is looking for opportunities to replicate and upscale.

Legal guidance for setting and payment of fees

NASS took legal advice from counsel to better understand the law as it applies to the setting and payment of fees for children and young people with EHC plans who are placed in special schools.

We published public and private guidance in December 2023 and in 2024 we will be actively supporting NASS member schools to make practical use of this advice.



Innovative technology

Studies show that children and young people with SEND are more prone to experiencing difficulty in falling and staying asleep than their peers.

NASS partnered with leading sleep experts, Hunrosa to develop two innovative sleep apps that assist learners, healthcare professionals, schools and parents in helping children and young people manage sleep difficulties.



Treloar School won the Breaking Barriers Award for its Clarion project in the 2023 NASS Awards.



Making a difference



In our 2023 membership survey and training feedback, this is what our members told us:

- 94%** acknowledged that **NASS has successfully advocated** for their interests to the government and other important stakeholders.
- 90%** said NASS **Special Interest Groups were valuable**, with members rating them as high or very high.
- 89%** rated **NASS training events** as excellent or good.
- 86%** rated the presenters of our **NASS training events** as excellent.
- 87%** gave **NASS News**, our electronic member newsletter, a rating of high or very high.
- 81%** told us that **NASS email briefings on key issues or topics were insightful**, rating them high or very high.

Did you know?

NASS responds to around **15 member email and telephone queries a day**

What our members told us



NASS provides a collective voice, representing and supporting members on matters that concern and worry us.

It offers not only a representative voice nationally but provides guidance, training and networking opportunities that help us all when we face the day-to-day challenges of our own organisations as well as sector wide issues



I have been impressed with the support shown towards our schools and how NASS represents the sector on a national platform.

The education sector is very difficult to navigate and NASS provides our schools with a network of people to talk to in order to improve our service, share our worries and make our voices heard in the right places.



NASS has been a consistent, well informed, well connected stable support to our school.

Its connection into governments departments and the regulator and then out to members gives great confidence that its work is in touch and meets need, improving the quality of provision for children and young people.



We gain a great deal from our NASS membership including access to a network of similar organisations, training and support.

I see the work of NASS as critical in helping our sector to thrive, encouraging innovation, strengthening our voice and influence.

West Kirby School won the Innovation Award with its School Bakery project in the 2023 NASS Awards.



Hot Drinks	
Tea £2.25	Latte £2.95
Breakfast	Hot Chocolate £2.50
Mint	Americano £2.50
Green	Cappuccino £2.95
Berry	Espresso £2.25
	Flat White £2.50



Our strategic aims

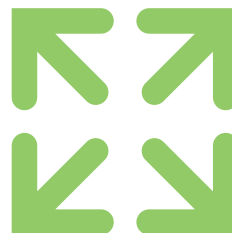
Special schools are an important part of our education system and NASS is privileged to work with more than 400 member schools that provide specialist provision for thousands of children and young people with SEND.

We remain committed to championing high-quality, specialist provision within a modern, inclusive education service that respects the choices of children, their families, and carers.

The work we do is underpinned by our four strategic aims:



To position NASS and its members as powerhouses of sharing 'what works for children and young people with SEND' in light of the SEND Review.



To grow and broaden our membership to include more academies and free schools, to increase our reach and influence.



To develop an evidence base of how member schools improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.



To demonstrate the value of the non local authority special sector through conducting research and running projects that strengthen and promote the sector.



Aurora White House School's bullying awareness programme was a shortlisted nominee for the Innovation award in the 2023 NASS Awards.

nassschools.org.uk

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