

PRESS RELEASE – 08.02.2021

Exciting new announcements for Fakenham special school

Plans are progressing at speed for a new special school in Fakenham with the confirmation of its new name, the appointment of its new headteacher, and a public consultation.

The school will be run by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Academies Trust (SENDAT) and is being built on the site of the former Fakenham Sixth Form College in Wells Road by Norfolk County Council as part of its £120 million programme to transform special education.

It will be a modern specialist learning environment for up to 100 children and young people, aged between 5 and 16, with autism and complex communication and interaction needs.

SENDAT is pleased to announce the new school will be named Duke of Lancaster School. The trust was keen the name of the school had a local narrative with which students, parents and the local community can identify. The town of Fakenham has strong links to the title of Duke of Lancaster, with the official name of Fakenham Lancaster being given to the town in 1377 when John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, was given the Manor of Fakenham. John of Gaunt was the founder of the House of Lancaster which ruled England until the War of the Roses. The Duke of Lancaster title is already used by Fakenham Town Council; the town's district wards are called Lancaster North and Lancaster South.

The trust is also very pleased to announce the new headteacher will be Robert Speck, former Vice Principal and Head of Secondary at The Wherry School in Norwich. Robert has spent the last four years at The Wherry School, which is a special school for high functioning autistic children and young people. Prior to this, he spent over a decade working in mainstream secondary education on the North Norfolk coast which included leadership roles such as Vice Principal and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator.

Robert will start his role in April and, with SENDAT, will work closely with Norfolk County Council, parents and carers of prospective students, local schools, and the community, and all other stakeholders, to plan for the opening of the new school in January 2022.

Speaking of his appointment, Robert commented: "My experiences have underlined the high demand for specialist provision for children and young people who are able to access the national curriculum but require additional flexibility and a specialist environment to thrive. The opportunity to help lead the creation of this at Duke of Lancaster School was very appealing and I am thrilled to have been appointed as Head of School.

"I am proud to live in Norfolk and to have been given the honour of helping to create a school that will have an exceptional reputation. I feel closely aligned with the vision and values of SENDAT. Their commitment to ensuring all children have access to quality education deeply resonates with me."

Robert spoke of his aspirations for the new school: "My vision for Duke of Lancaster School is to create a calm, safe and happy environment where everyone treats each other with kindness and respect. Children and young people who attend Duke of Lancaster School will receive a high quality holistic, ambitious and thoughtfully planned curriculum that places the individual and their voice at the centre of all choices and provides students with the social, emotional and academic skills and knowledge required to enable freedom of choice and independence in adult life."

Lawrence Chapman, CEO of SENDAT added: "I am delighted that SENDAT can support the development of new specialist provision in Fakenham working in partnership with Norfolk County Council. We are committed to supporting Norfolk's transformational programme and working with

parents/carers and young people to develop the specialist resources they need. SENDAT is entirely focused on specialist provision in the East of England. We will be further developing the website over the next few weeks and months to share information as it is available.

Duke of Lancaster School will provide an offer that is consistent with our other schools including our SENDAT 20 enrichment programme, curriculum pathways, Trauma Informed practice, use of outdoor learning and much more.

I would also like to give thanks to the work of architects and designers within NPS who have gone the extra mile to give Duke of Lancaster School a building that will be fit for purpose and what these children and young people deserve.”

The six-week public consultation, known as a Section 10 consultation, will open on Monday 22 February and close on Sunday 4 April. It will include an online survey, which will be made available at www.sendat.academy from Monday 22 February, and a free online event open to all. The online event will be held from 10:00am to 12:00pm Thursday 25 February. You can book a place to attend at www.sendat.academy

The consultation and online event aim to give local people including parents, residents, community groups, school leaders, parent/carer organisations and others, the chance to express their views, ask questions, and hear from SENDAT and Norfolk County Council about plans for the site, access and transport, how the school will operate within the local community, how admissions will work, and the vision and ethos of the new school.

For further information about the consultation or to request a hard copy of the online consultation event or questionnaire, please email consultation@dukeoflancaster.sendat.academy or call 01284 717872.

Admissions for all special schools are arranged through Norfolk County Council. If this school is possibly suitable for your child, your Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) co-ordinator will talk to you about the setting as part of the local options. To find out more log onto this page [Admissions to specialist schools - Norfolk County Council](#)

Cllr John Fisher, cabinet member for Children’s Services at Norfolk County Council said: “It really is exciting to see how much progress is being made to open this new school, despite all the challenges posed by Covid-19.

“Our transformation programme is dedicated to providing 500 more specialist places for children with SEND needs in both special schools and within mainstream settings enabling children and young people wherever possible to attend school close to home, within their communities, and without the need to spend long periods of time travelling between home and school.

“We are really looking forward to working with SENDAT and I feel confident this school will be a real asset to the North Norfolk area and a fantastic place for children to get the right education so they can fulfil their goals for the future.”

R G Carter, the appointed contractor, started laying the foundations on site in January 2021. Construction is expected to complete in Autumn 2021.

[For further details about Duke of Lancaster school, and to follow progress of the new build, please see: \[www.sendat.academy\]\(http://www.sendat.academy\)](#)

ENDS

Attachments: Photos/Images: Robert Speck/ CGI External Image/ Duke of Lancaster School site



Above - Robert Speck



Above - NPS Group's proposed visual for Duke of Lancaster School



Above - Duke of Lancaster site, January 2021

Notes for editors:

SENDAT

SENDAT is a multi-academy trust in special education and specialist provision in the eastern region. Its vision is to develop a continuum of provision for children and young people, aged between 5 and 25, which enables the trust to fully support pupils and parents. This vision is driven by SENDAT's belief that all should have the same right to an excellent education regardless of whether they have additional needs of any kind, and SENDAT are committed to providing this in their range of provision. SENDAT is also committed to working closely with all partners and stakeholders for the benefit of children and young people in its schools and the wider community. There is a key focus on successful transition in and transition out for all students in SENDAT's schools. SENDAT work closely with parents, special and mainstream primary and secondary schools and FE providers to provide this. www.sendat.academy

For further information contact Lawrence Chapman, CEO of SENDAT: 01284 717870/
fakenham@sendat.academy