

# Cullum Centres

Supporting young autistic minds  
within mainstream schools

## A guide for parents and carers

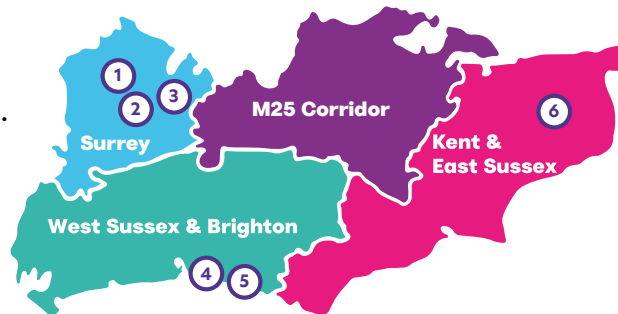
This guide shares a bit of background behind the National Autistic Society Cullum Centres and answers some of your key questions.

### What is a Cullum Centre?

A National Autistic Society Cullum Centre is a specialist resource provision built on and fully integrated into a mainstream primary or secondary school.

Each centre is a partnership between the National Autistic Society, Cullum Family Trust, the local authority and the school where the centre is located.

There are currently six Cullum Centres in five mainstream secondary schools across the south of the UK. These facilities support autistic students aged 11-16 years.



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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ① Salesians - Surrey     | ④ Hove Park, Valley Campus - Hove |
| ② Rodborough - Surrey    | ⑤ Hove Park, Nevill Campus - Hove |
| ③ Hinchley Wood - Surrey | ⑥ Canterbury Academy - Kent       |

### Who runs the Cullum Centres?

Each centre is run by the school. The school is responsible for the centre's staffing, training and curriculum. The National Autistic Society is heavily involved in setting up each centre.

However, we also provide consultancy once a centre is up and running upon request. The school is also expected to undertake and achieve our Autism Accreditation programme alongside annual monitoring to ensure best-practice support for autistic students.

## What is the typical student profile in the Cullum Centres?

The Cullum Centres support students diagnosed with autism who are likely to achieve the expected National Curriculum standards. These students would not meet the requirements for a special school placement but would also likely feel unable to achieve their potential in a mainstream setting without the Cullum Centre's support.

The expectation is that students accessing these centres may require this support for most of their schooling. However, the overall aim is to help each autistic student integrate back into the main school alongside their peers.

A Cullum Centre student will:

- hold an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have a reasonable expectation and ability to access the mainstream curriculum and achieve the accredited qualifications at the school
- manage with and benefit from mainstream classrooms with appropriate support from the centre.

## How do Cullum Centres work within the school?

Cullum Centres are embedded in mainstream schools and are dedicated to fully including autistic students in every aspect of the school's life.

Students use the centre for specialist autism support (eg to develop their social or learning skills or to unwind during breaks). With support from these centres, students will spend most of their time in mainstream classes and activities every day.

Students who use a Cullum Centre follow a mainstream timetable like all students in the school. They study the full academic curriculum, with some lessons replaced by sessions in the centre.

Within the centre, students build their understanding of how autism impacts their lives. They learn strategies to help them overcome any barriers in the classroom and beyond to explore and strengthen their social skills and independence.

## What interventions can the Cullum Centres provide?

Cullum Centre students benefit from a range of interventions. These can support their individual development, ongoing studies and inclusion in mainstream school life. Interventions are adapted to meet the needs of the individual student.

They can include:

- additional support in English and Maths
- study support for specific subjects
- exam techniques
- study skills

- managing transitions
- life skills and independence
- mentoring/key worker support
- therapeutic interventions
- sensory/emotional regulation programme
- Forest School
- support from an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA)
- speech and language groups, focusing on:
  - vocabulary
  - active listening
  - Memory Magic
  - Circle of Friends
  - Lego therapy.

### How do you apply for a Cullum Centre place?

Admissions to Cullum Centres are managed through the local authority process for autistic students with an EHC plan, not directly through the school or the National Autistic Society. Young autistic people can decide on their preference for placements with their families and carers within an EHC plan review and have this written into the plan.

Each centre is advised to have a maximum of 22 places to ensure the best environment for students who access it.

### Could a school near you set up a new Cullum Centre?

Yes. We are committed to increasing the number of Cullum Centres in the UK.

The development of a Cullum Centre is a three-way partnership between the National Autistic Society, the local authority and the school. Each partner has their own responsibilities and commitments. There are specific requirements a school must meet to be considered for a new Cullum Centre, including a "good" or "outstanding" Ofsted rating.

The first stage of approval is securing interest from the local authority and the school, followed by agreement from the Cullum Family Trust for the centre location. We recommend approaching the school and your local authority to discuss the possibility of building a centre near you. The National Autistic Society can support these conversations, and you can get in touch for more information at [cullum.centres@nas.org.uk](mailto:cullum.centres@nas.org.uk).

If you wish to share further details with relevant partners in your area, you can also [use our guide for schools and local authorities](#).



Visit our website to find out more: [autism.org.uk/cullumcentres](https://autism.org.uk/cullumcentres)