



Cognus

No Limits on Learning

# Annual Review 2022-23

## #CognusandProud



# Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce our latest Annual Review covering the 2022-23 academic year.

Together with our partners across schools, education settings and the local community, we have delivered a range of impactful education support services for Sutton's children and young people – from offering exceptional opportunities for our young musicians to perform live, to delivering excellent academic results for our Children Looked After and further developing our Paving the Way community for young people needing early intervention to address a range of issues.

All of Cognus' work focuses on a positive impact for families, children and young people. This year we've strengthened our engagement with young people further, be it conducting focus groups to hear their views on the Council's Home to School Travel policy, to co-creating an attendance campaign with Sutton students. We've also updated our website to ensure it is more family-friendly and accessible. One of our particular highlights of the year was hosting our first Christmas event for families with children with additional needs to attend and access professional advice, as well as enjoy festive activities in a safe and inclusive environment.

As we look to the new academic year, we have a lot to be positive about and wish to thank all of our schools, setting and partners for your hard work and achievements; we look forward to working with you all next year. As always, if you have any comments on how we could improve services, or work more collaboratively with you, please do get in touch.

Joanna Cassey  
Managing Director



# Sutton Music Trust becomes a charity

In April 2023, Sutton Music Service transitioned into a charity subsidiary of Cognus, now known as Sutton Music Trust. This transformation marked a significant milestone for the Music Service, which has been dedicated to serving the Sutton community for over 50 years. As a charity, we can now actively pursue diverse funding avenues, benefit from charitable reliefs, and align ourselves more effectively with the aspirations outlined in 'The Power of Music to Change Lives: A National Plan for Music Education (2022)'.

Key highlights from 2022-23, illustrating our progress towards this vision, include:

- The development of our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Music strategy, featuring the launch of our self-evaluation tool, Mini Melody Makers for childminders and their young charges, and the creation of a series of instructional videos to facilitate music engagement in the early years.
- The inaugural whole school performance by young musicians who participate weekly in our inclusive Open Orchestra programme, performed at Sherwood Park.
- Young people from across the borough created images about what music means to them, and these were displayed as part of Sutton's 2023 Cultural Impact Award events.
- In July, the Sutton Youth Wind Orchestra received an invitation to perform at the Music for Youth National Festival held in Birmingham, a prestigious event that witnessed their captivating performance on the stage of the Birmingham Symphony Hall.



In June, our annual Key Stage 2 Instrumental Festival was held at the Fairfield Halls in Croydon. Over 400 students from 15 Sutton Primary schools took to the Phoenix Concert Hall stage, uniting to share and celebrate their musical journey over the past year.

To find out more about our work visit [suttonmusictrust.org.uk](https://suttonmusictrust.org.uk)



# Education Safeguarding: Raising Awareness on Child Exploitation

Steve Welding (E-Safety Advisor) and Hayley Cameron (Education Safeguarding Manager) were part of a multi-agency working group tasked with developing a programme of events for young people, families and professionals to promote Child Exploitation Awareness Week (13th-17th March 2023).

*"I know about grooming and things that happen online, but if it was happening to me, I wouldn't talk to my parents about it. I would probably talk to a teacher in school"* (Young person, Sutton Library, March 2023)

During the week, there were a range of events taking place. We had information stands in Sutton library and outside McDonalds in Sutton High Street. There was a good flow of young people and invaluable information being shared around exploitation. Surveys were distributed to young people and their families to try and understand the current risks and experiences people were facing. We shared resources during our Secondary Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Network Meeting, where all schools attended, despite it being a National Strike Day.

*"The agencies in Sutton have really come together to raise awareness on a topic which everyone needs to know more about. The resources have been helpful, and I am more confident to signpost now"* (Secondary Designated Safeguarding Lead, March 2023)

Our Education Safeguarding Manager co-delivered Contextual Safeguarding training, along with a Children's First Contact Centre (CFCS) Champion, to 16 frontline workers. Our E-Safety Advisor also delivered 13 sessions on E-Safety throughout the week, reaching 640 Primary and Secondary children. He also attended a parents' event at a local primary school.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We all want what is best for our young people and we are all in this together.



# Stepping up for Attendance

With the introduction of new core duties for Attendance, Cognus' Attendance team has grown and developed to best support our schools with this complex and persistent issue.

One highlight was a collaboration with Sutton Virtual School and young people from across the borough to gather youth voice on attendance. This led to the creation of an attendance video and campaign name selected by the young people, #SchoolTodayFutureTomorrow.

We also piloted an Attendance Panel to help severely stuck cases. This involved multi-agency contacts coming together and sharing ideas on how best to help those children, further building relationships with partners and ensuring all perspectives and avenues are pursued to support schools and families.

## Autism service develops Champions



The Autism Service goes from strength to strength, with ongoing training and support for 62 Autism Leads within schools last year and coordinated support from Cognus Autism Champions. The team also carried out a skills and development audit to better assess the specific skills and knowledge they bring to the Champions team, as well as what training and support they need.

Together, we facilitated a successful Autism Acceptance Week where 434 young people, parents and professionals attended. This year we also delivered training for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) to upskill and deliver understanding diagnosis support in schools.

## Traveller Education Service drives inclusivity

Throughout the year the team supported children, families, schools and other professionals across Sutton and Merton with a broad spectrum of issues such as:

- Delivering Free School Meal Vouchers to site, ensuring the most vulnerable families could eat during school holidays.
- Ensuring a pupil's needs were met, resulting in attendance and behaviour improvements and them being allowed to go on a school trip.
- The team were part of a very successful collaboration involving Social Services, schools, other TES services and even a national alert via Friends, Families & Travellers to locate a missing Traveller child.
- They visited a number of unauthorised encampment visits in Sutton to carry out welfare checks on the families. Outcomes from these visits included ensuring pregnant women were able to access vital prenatal care and could freely travel on and off the site
- Working with colleagues from the NHS and London Borough of Sutton, the service ensured that a parent was able to be seen by a Health Visitor to carry out essential health checks on their children.



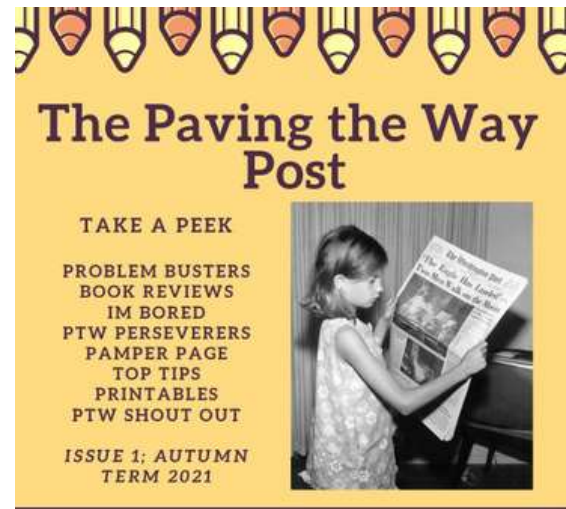
- The team held presentation events to promote Gypsy, Roma & Traveller History Month (GRTHM) in both Sutton and Merton. Both events were very successful and attended by families, schools, councillors, and the Deputy Mayor. The Leader of Sutton Council tweeted positively about our GRTHM event and another council leader emailed to congratulate the team on the event stating "our commitment to the community shone through."



# Our Paving Way Community

The first edition of the *Paving the Way Post* was launched in the Autumn term of 2021. The service, which supports early identification and intervention for a range of behavioural difficulties, has now recruited 'reporters' from a total of six primary schools who have created different editions of the newspaper covering a variety of themes.

More recently, we have also created two 'special edition' newspapers focusing on the conflict in Ukraine and sharing information about two children who experienced similar medical heart conditions.



In September 2023 the Paving the Way team were celebrating completing their first year of Paving the Way Warriors group. Six group programmes have been completed, supporting a total of 40 children from 23 different primary schools across the borough.

The team cannot wait to continue and grow the success of the group in the coming year.

*"My child looks forward to going and it is her safe space. She enjoys the company of the other children. I think she likes the fact it is not too pressured like school and she can be herself",* Parent

*"He's built confidence to try new things, developed strategies when things go wrong, and it has supported him to respond to his emotions",* Parent

*"They helped me calm my mind",* Warrior

*"They made me feel a bit less nervous about new things",* Warrior



# School Admissions

School Admissions is not one of those services that people think about until they need it. Most families will only come in to contact with us for starting Primary School aged 4 and starting Secondary School age 11, but our service is so much more than that and over recent years has changed beyond all recognition, mainly due to academisation and a growing local population.

The government schemes for Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukrainian settlers in the UK had a big impact on Sutton and on our services, and continued schemes for skilled workers increase arrivals. Sutton has the second highest number of Hong Kong arrivals in London, and families have continued to arrive from Hong Kong (albeit in lower numbers) in the last year – over 250 seeking a school place for or during the 22/23 academic year – and we have continued to ensure a school place for every child that wants one.

The summer holidays are one of our busiest periods due to this being the peak time for house moves and often linked to grammar school places; between June and August 2023 we received 625 'In Year' School Applications (12% up on last year) and over 6,000 emails from parents, schools and other councils.

Despite the increase in numbers applying to start primary school and transfer to secondary school, 97% of families received a preference school offer.

We work closely with local schools to achieve this, and recently received positive feedback from an outgoing admissions officer in a primary school:

*"Can I just take this opportunity to say what a pleasure it has been to work with each and every one of you. Your professionalism and support has been amazing and very much appreciated. I wish you all the very best for the future and am confident that whoever takes over my role will be supported. You guys are amazing, the unsung heroes of education in my opinion, I literally would not have been able to do it without you."*





# Improving educational outcomes for Sutton's care experienced children

Sutton's Virtual School, for children who are looked after by the local authority, received their end of key stage assessments. Just some of our positive results were:

## Early Years

Thirteen students took an assessment and achieved an overall 61.5% Good Level of Development (GLD) - considerably higher than national average of 41% and a regional average of 46% - and almost in line with all Sutton children (68.3% GLD). This is a continuing year on year trend. Sutton Children Looked After (CLA) with SEND in early years (EHCP and SEND Support) also achieved 33.3%, compared to a national average of 17% and 18% regional average for CLA.

## Key Stage 1 – 2 Progress

Sutton CLA made excellent progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2, accelerating their progress significantly with an average progress score of +2.22 in reading (national CLA -0.54) and +0.59 in writing (national CLA -0.93) Sutton SEND CLA achieved well from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, with a progress score of +2.38 in reading (compared to -1.45 National CLA) and better than other groups in writing with -0.80, compared to -2.10 National CLA, -1.26 Regional CLA.

Councillor Marian James, Chair of Sutton Council's People Committee, said:

*"Our mainstream education exam results this year really buck the national trend. These figures for students at our Virtual School are outstanding! Many of them have endured very difficult starts in life, but with the dedication of Sutton Virtual School staff and the teaching staff in each school they attend, these children are really being empowered to excel. I am delighted for each and every one of them."*

Kate Leyshon, Head Teacher at Sutton Virtual School, said:

*"We couldn't be happier for our students. They have worked incredibly hard to achieve these results, which give them the confidence to go on working hard on their education. One of our older students has received an offer from Oxford, which we are all thrilled about for her."*



## Cognus Therapies trains 28 education professionals in ELKLAN

Cognus Therapies delivered the accredited ELKLAN training to 28 members of school staff across the Sutton. Elklan are national leaders in training education practitioners and parents to help children and young people develop the communication skills they need to succeed in life.

This training was hosted by Harris Academy, Sutton and ran from February to June 2023 to develop educational staff to support children and young people in secondary schools with their speech, language and communication needs in the classroom.

Staff attended from 11 secondary schools: Carshalton Girls, Greenshaw, Oaks Park High School, STARS, Cheam High School, Overton Grange, Carshalton Boys Sports College, Glenthorne, Nonsuch High School for Girls, Harris Academy Sutton and Sutton Grammar School. All attendees had the opportunity to gain a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification through completing this course. 16 of the ELKLAN attendees have also gone on to complete the Therapies SEND Champion training to upskill their provision further and embed a universal approach to therapy support in their setting.

Cognus therapists received positive feedback about the course, where all attendees have either already shared or plan to share their learning with their educational provisions.

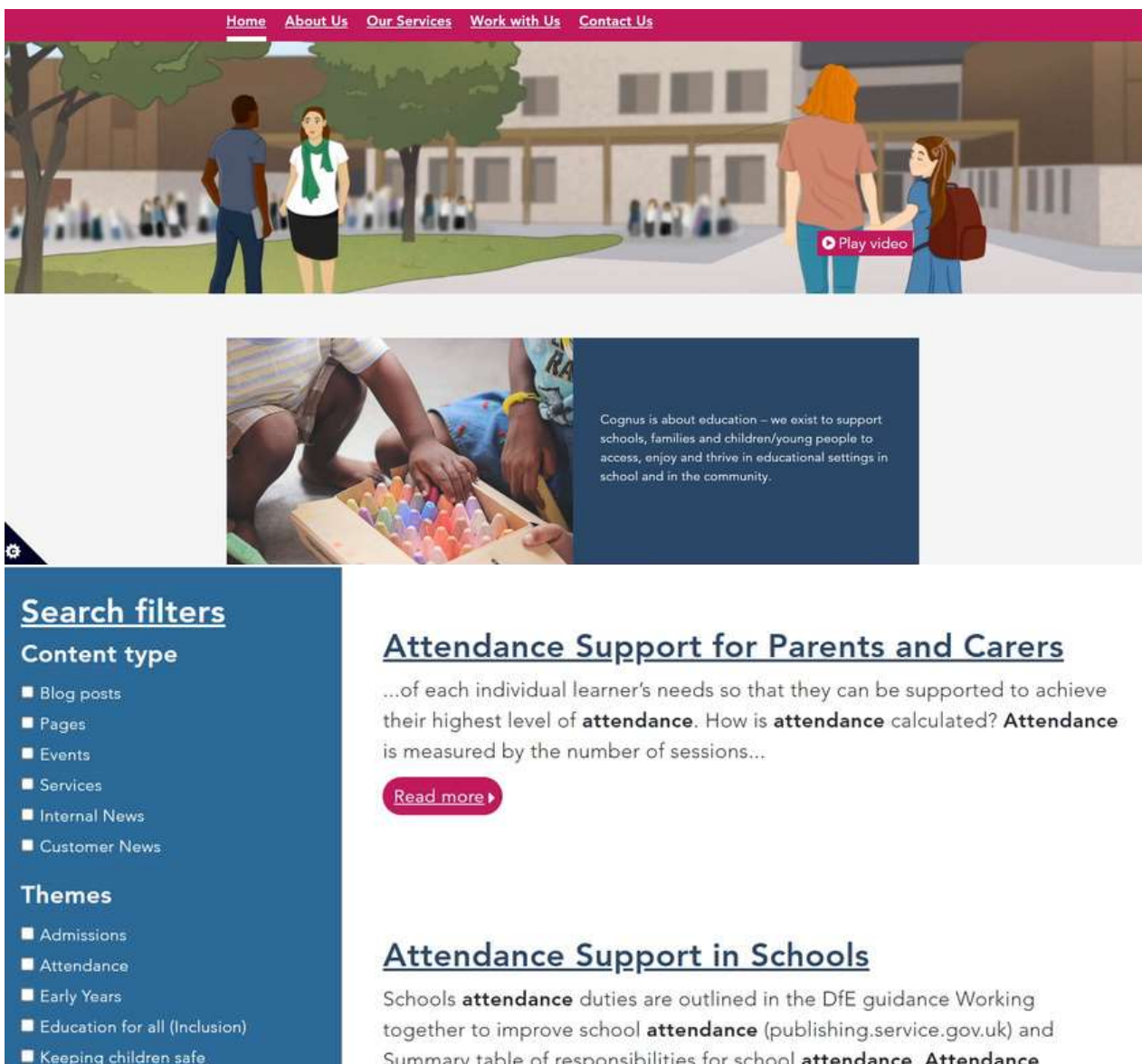
A huge thank you to the education staff that attended the sessions across two terms to develop their knowledge and skills in supporting young people with speech, language and communication needs.



# Our Partnership with Sutton families

During summer 2023, we reviewed the Cognus website and relaunched it with easier navigation and access to resources, following feedback from families. Whilst the site content and style looks very similar, changes include:

- A refreshed and optimised homepage, including a new events and training section and an animation to showcase who we are and what we do.
- Improved site navigation for parents and carers, by introducing content categories which cut across services; for example, parents can search for 'Attendance' and learn about resources that can support this from across multiple Cognus services.
- Resources and information are tagged by theme, key stage and for families or professionals, to ensure they are appropriate and easier to find.



The screenshot shows the Cognus website homepage. At the top is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Our Services, Work with Us, and Contact Us. Below this is a large illustration of a school scene with a 'Play video' button. A central text box states: 'Cognus is about education – we exist to support schools, families and children/young people to access, enjoy and thrive in educational settings in school and in the community.' On the left is a 'Search filters' sidebar with sections for 'Content type' (Blog posts, Pages, Events, Services, Internal News, Customer News) and 'Themes' (Admissions, Attendance, Early Years, Education for all (Inclusion), Keeping children safe). The main content area features two article teasers: 'Attendance Support for Parents and Carers' and 'Attendance Support in Schools', each with a 'Read more' button.



## Our Partnership with Sutton families

Cognus hosted its first Families' Christmas event on 15 December 2022, in partnership with London Borough of Sutton's Children's Services. The event, held at Cognus' office in Wallington, was an opportunity for invited Sutton families, including those with additional needs, to gather information on local services, as well as take part in a range of inclusive festive activities - from face-painting and wreath-making, to biscuit decorating and even a gift from Santa, donated by staff and the local community!

The event saw more than 100 people attend. Feedback was really positive from families; one parent said:

*"I would just like to say how truly amazing the event was for us as a family. It was beyond incredible to see L encouraged and listened to while interacting with everyone. The atmosphere was beautiful and meant the world to L as he felt safe and happy to be himself. Please know how special this was for us. We both left with smiles on our faces (which I hope you can appreciate is a rarity!)"*



# Other Service Highlights

## Clinical Psychology

Clinical Psychology developed and implemented The 'A' Plan initiative to improve and streamline the post diagnostic pathway and support for autistic young people within Sutton, using the insights gathered from their autism assessment. The service also conducted five presentations during National Autism Week, facilitated a Tote Bag designing event for autistic young people and co-facilitated a Parent Advice Surgery Day.

## Sutton Information Advice and Support Services (SIASS)

Last year, the two SIASS caseworkers supported 344 SEND families (a 19% increase over the previous year's total caseload) and improved the customer service feedback ratings in 5 out of 6 categories.

## Early Years

Working across the local area to support families and professionals at this important stage, this work included successful nursery/Reception transition days to bring early years and school professionals together, and developing a comprehensive package of support for Reception children without a base place in September.

## Education Psychology

The Education Psychology team ran a well attended free course on Suicide Intervention training in May. The session explored attitudes to suicide, provided attendees with a framework for managing conversations about suicide and increased confidence to cope with what can be an emotive and challenging topic.



# Feedback on our Work...

## **Admissions**

*"Great news! Thank you very much for all your great assistance helping C back to school. I can't say thank you enough for all your help! I can't stop my tears! Million thanks again for everyone helping on this case."*

## **Education Safeguarding Team**

*"A very quick note to thank you all for your support over the years - particularly during the pandemic and since. You all do a fantastic job and I sincerely hope Ofsted recognise your leadership."*

## **Attendance Team**

*You have provided a wealth of really useful information and I will promote this at my groups. It is easy to read. I have sent the link to some parents and I've asked them to provide you with feedback. I am very impressed. Well done to the team."*

## **SEND Service**

*"Thank you for your thoroughness and professionalism regarding [our son's] updated EHCP. We are absolutely thrilled with your response time to emails, the copies of all the appropriate documentation you sent through and the tracked changes on the proposed amended plan. Thank you again so, so much."*

## **Sutton Music Trust**

*"A huge congratulations to all the tutors and staff at Sutton Music Trust for a truly outstanding concert last night. Concerts and performances of last night's standard do not just happen by chance. I feel very blessed to have such a wonderful Music Trust working their magic in Sutton."*





# Cognus

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[www.cognus.org.uk](http://www.cognus.org.uk)  
@CognusLimited  
020 8323 0450  
[enquiries@cognus.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cognus.org.uk)

