

JESS
Dubai

Inclusion Conference

P A R E N T P R O G R A M M E



Date: Saturday 6th June 2026

Venue: JESS Arabian Ranches

Free to Attend (pre-registration required)



Inclusion Conference

P A R E N T P R O G R A M M E



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Scan the QR code or click the link to reserve your place at this free-to-attend conference

Welcome

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the JESS Inclusion Conference. Inclusion has always sat at the heart of who we are as a school, but like every meaningful journey, our practice has continued to evolve.

At JESS, we believe that every child should feel known, valued and able to flourish, and our commitment is not simply to provide support when barriers arise, but to build a culture where difference is understood, respected and celebrated.

This conference reflects both our own journey and the wider direction of education in Dubai. The UAE Government's Education 33 agenda places the learner at the centre of the system, with a clear commitment to equitable, accessible education designed around the wellbeing of diverse learners.

That vision strongly aligns with our work at JESS: the daily commitment of our dedicated inclusion department, Oasis, our school counsellors, and teaching teams; the partnerships we build with parents; and the belief that every student deserves the right pathway, the right support and the confidence to make a difference in the world. Thank you for joining us as we learn, reflect and strengthen that commitment together.



Mr Shane O' Brein

Director



Mrs Alison Dawson

Inclusion Governor

As Inclusion Governor, and as someone whose own family has been part of the JESS community since the Foundation years, I am especially proud to welcome you to this conference. Inclusion is deeply personal. It is about the child who needs a different route into learning, the parent seeking reassurance, the teacher adapting with care, and the school community choosing to see ability, potential and individuality before anything else.

Over the years, JESS has developed thoughtful and responsive provision that supports children academically, socially and emotionally, from early identification and in-class adaptations through to our Essential Pathways tailored curriculum. The impact of this work can be seen not only in progress data or formal plans, but in students' confidence, independence and sense of belonging. We are delighted celebrate this work and join together to listen to expert voices. As we make new connections we will continue to strengthen the partnership between school, families and the wider professional community so that every learner is supported to thrive.



Mrs Sharon Burke

**Whole School
Inclusion Lead**

Having worked in the field of inclusion within the UAE for close to 20 years, it has been a privilege to play my own small part in Dubai's journey towards becoming a fully inclusive society. From supporting children and families on an individual basis, to driving large-scale change in organisational culture and practices, the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives has been incredibly humbling.

The proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" highlights the idea that family, friends, teachers and the wider community all play essential roles in supporting a child's development. This conference brings together the vast experiences and expertise of parents, educators, developmental and clinical specialists within our community to strengthen our 'village' - a place where every child is understood, appreciated and empowered.

Parents Programme

for English-Speaking Parents and Carers

Time	Sessions	Speakers
10:00am	Supporting Your Child's Inclusion Journey Through Effective Home-School Collaboration	Louise Dawson, consultant
	Learning to Speak Dragon: A new way to view and educate others on your child's sensory processing	Adam Griffin, OT and Medical Director @ Hakkini Clinic
	Raising Children in the iGeneration- Digital literacy vs digital dependency	Anna White, OT and Director of MHFA @ Lighthouse Arabia
11:00am	Purposeful Parenting - Raising resilient, respectful children through healthy, compassionate boundaries	Michelle Estekantchi, Psychologist @ Thrive Wellbeing Centre
	Exploring alternative educational and career pathways for young people with Autism -Advice from one parent to another	Mai El Dahan @ Autism Diaries
12:00pm	Building Language Rich Foundations to Support Your Child's School Readiness	Thasbih Amin and Stephanie Love, Speech & Language Therapists @ JESS
	Medication and the Mind : Understanding the role of psychopharmacology in ADHD, anxiety or depression	Dr Imran Mushtaq, Psychiatrist @ British Premier Psychiatry & Psychology
	Unique Learners and University Transitions	Rhonwen Scott, Inclusion Teacher @ JESS Dubai
1:30pm	Autism in Teens and Girls	Dr Alexandra Longshaw, Psychologist @ Insights Psychology
	ADHD: What Every Parent Needs to Know	Nadia Mankani & Angela Marson @ ADHD360
2:30pm	Auditory Processing Disorder Explained	Sarah Darwish, Audiologist @ Genesis
	Blooming Brains: Supporting emotional regulation in children	Nadia Herb (OT) and Aliyah Marshall (counsellor) @ JESS

Important Note: Parents must arrive 15 minutes before their scheduled session to sign in.

Meet the Speakers

from Our Partner Organisations



HAKKINI
MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS



THE LIGHTHOUSE®
CENTER FOR WELLBEING



StarBright
EARLY INTERVENTION CENTER



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medical center



BRITISH PREMIER
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INSIGHTS
— PSYCHOLOGY —

Genesis
Healthcare Center



THE VALENS
CLINIC
Health | Hope | Harmony

Building Language Rich Foundations to Support Your Child's School Readiness

This presentation explores how the strong correlation between speech, language, and communication skills and overall school readiness and early learning success. It highlights typical developmental milestones in early childhood as well as when to reach out to a specialist for advice or support.

Parents attending this session will leave with practical advice and recommendations for creating a language-rich environment through everyday interactions, play, and shared reading. By supporting children's listening, understanding, speaking, and social communication skills from the earliest years, parents play a vital role in setting their child up for a positive school start and long-term academic success.



Thasbih Amin

Speech & Language
Therapist at JESS

Working as the in-house Speech and Language Therapist at JESS Jumeirah, Thasbih has over a decade of experience supporting children in school and clinical settings. Holding a Master's degree in Speech Difficulties from the University of Sheffield, Thasbih specialises in speech, language, social communication, literacy-related difficulties, and autism. Thasbih takes a holistic, child-centred approach, promoting functional and sustainable outcomes through close collaboration with families and teachers, ensuring every child is supported to communicate, learn, and thrive.



Stephanie Love

Speech & Language
Therapist at JESS

Working as the in-house Speech and Language Therapist at JESS Arabian Ranches, Steph is a UK-trained Speech and Language Therapist with 16 years' experience across clinical and educational settings. She is passionate about early years development, supporting diverse communication needs, and nurturing children's language and wellbeing through evidence-based, child-centred practice. With a Master's degree in education, Steph's practice is very much rooted in supporting children to engage and thrive within their school environment alongside their peers.

Brains in Bloom: Supporting Emotional Regulation in Children

In this session, Nadia and Aliyah will describe how children's emotional brains develop in a way that is relatable for both carers and educators. Taking a brain-based view of behaviour, attendees will be supported to understand why young people's emotions can feel challenging or unpredictable at times, as well as why certain strategies may or may not be effective in the moment.

By joining this session, attendees will gain a clear understanding of what is developmentally typical in terms of emotional and behavioural regulation, and walk away with a suite of realistic and practical strategies to support big feelings and promote resilience.



Nadia Herb
Occupational
Therapist at JESS

Working as the in-house Occupational Therapist at JESS Arabian Ranches, Nadia is a South African-qualified Occupational Therapist with 15 years' experience in Dubai. With a wealth of clinical and educational experience, she specialises in assessment and interventions relating to Sensory Integration and Dyspraxia.

A mum of two, Nadia is a firm believer in play-based regulation and keeping children active to develop fundamental skills through natural, age-appropriate interactions and activities.



Aliyah Marshall
School Counsellor
at JESS

Australian-trained, school-based counsellor at JESS Arabian Ranches, Aliyah holds a Bachelor of Counselling Degree and a Master's qualification in Mental Health and Wellbeing in Education.

Aliyah is firmly committed to supporting children and adolescents to thrive across their educational journey and beyond.

ADHD: What Every Parent Needs to Know

This session offers parents a clear, practical understanding of ADHD, exploring its impact beyond attention and focus, including emotions, behaviour, and daily functioning.

It provides relatable insights into how ADHD shows up at home, alongside simple, effective strategies that can be implemented immediately.

Parents will learn how to intentionally build their child's emotional regulation and executive function skills, helping them develop the tools they need to thrive.



Nadia Mankani
Co-Founder ADHD360

Nadia is a certified ADHD coach with a Master's in Special Education and extensive experience supporting students with diverse learning needs in Dubai.

As a parent to two children with ADHD, she brings deep personal insight alongside professional expertise.

She is passionate about helping families feel understood, supported, and empowered to thrive with ADHD in everyday life.



Angela Marson
Co-Founder ADHD360

Angela is a UK-trained primary teacher with 25+ years' experience across the UK, USA and Dubai, spanning classroom teaching, inclusion, adult learning and home education.

Holding a Masters in Psychology (distinction) focused on ADHD in adult women, she is now a certified ADHD coach.

Drawing on professional expertise and parenting two teenagers, Angela supports teachers, families and individuals navigating ADHD.



Rhonwen Scott

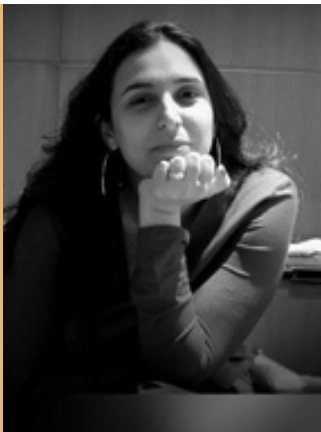
Inclusion Teacher at JESS

Choosing a University and Managing the Transition from School to University: Advice for Parents of Neurodivergent Students

As a secondary Inclusion Teacher at JESS Arabian Ranches, Rhonwen specialises in teaching maths and science to neurodivergent students. Her focus is on removing barriers to access by creating inclusive environments that support students' needs through alternative curricula and delivery approaches, exam access arrangements, and targeted academic interventions

About the Session:

This session explores how parents can support neurodivergent students in choosing the right university and preparing for the transition into first year. Drawing on personal experience and professional insight, it looks beyond league tables to consider academic and pastoral support, location, and access to family support—particularly for families based in Dubai. The session will discuss how support can differ between universities, the growing importance of student self advocacy, and what parents can realistically expect once their child turns 18. Attendees will gain practical strategies for preparing their child for university life, organisation, independence, and social transition.



Mai El Dahan

Autism Advocate

Exploring alternative educational and career pathways for young people with Autism

Mai El Dahan is a media specialist in radio and digital media, founder of Autism Diaries, and co-founder and host of the Ana Huna podcast, promoting autism awareness in Arabic across the Middle East. She is also the co-author of Oh Hamza?! children's book to help younger children understand autism and the mother of Saif, a 17-year-old athlete on the autism spectrum who inspires her advocacy work.

About the Session:

This session explores alternative educational and career pathways for students with autism through a personal, story-based journey with Saif. It addresses preparing young people for adulthood, including emotional challenges, independence, safety, friendships, and physical activity. The session equips parents with practical insights to support their child's development and highlights the importance of collaboration between families, schools, rehabilitation centers, and the wider community.



Dr. Sarah Darwish

Clinical Audiologist

Auditory Processing Disorder Explained

Dr Sarah Darwish is an audiologist in Dubai with over 20 years of clinical experience. She holds a Doctorate of Audiology the USA and a Master of Clinical Audiology from the University of Western Australia. Dr Darwish practices at Genesis Healthcare Center.

About the Session:

This session will explain what Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) is, how it differs from hearing loss and other conditions, and the common signs seen in children affected by this condition. We'll look at how APD can affect listening and attention, following instructions, literacy skills, and academic performance. The session will also cover what an assessment of APD involves and offers suggestions for information to gather in order to make a referral. The session will end with generalized, practical recommendations for classroom/home accommodations, and a discussion of the role of auditory training.



Michelle Estekanchi

Psychologist

Purposeful Parenting:

Raising resilient, respectful children through healthy, compassionate boundaries

As a highly qualified psychologist with extensive experience spanning three different continents, my main ambition has always been to make a tangible and lasting difference to the lives of others. Equipping my clients with strategies to overcome emotional challenges, achieve personal growth and build fulfilling lives has been the unequivocal driving force throughout my career. Through a process of trust and validation, I empower my clients so that they can learn to flourish and truly thrive.

About the Session:

Join us for an insightful session where we explore the differences between gentle and permissive parenting. Learn practical strategies to foster a nurturing environment while setting healthy boundaries. This workshop will empower you with the tools to raise confident, respectful, resilient and happy children.



Anna White

Occupational Therapist & Director of MHFA

Parenting and Teaching in the iGeneration: Digital literacy vs digital dependency

Director of Corporate & Workplace Services and Mental Health First Aid for The LightHouse, and a licensed Occupational Therapist, Anna has over 10 years of experience working with children, teens and adults across clinic, community, corporate and school environments. Anna's regularly facilitates a range of mental health services for audiences, from workshops and seminars to webinars, panels, and fireside chats.

About the Session:

This session will explore how today's digital environment is shaping children's identity, attention, relationships, and overall development. Anna will discuss the impact of technology on emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and social connections, as well as the cultural messages children are exposed to through screens, and how these influence values and behaviour. Parents and educators will leave with practical, evidence-informed strategies to support a balanced and healthy relationship with technology.



Louise Dawson

Educational Consultant

Supporting Your Child's Inclusion Journey Through Effective Home-School Collaboration

Louise Dawson is an inclusion specialist and school improvement consultant based in the UAE, with over a twenty years experience supporting schools, leaders and families. She works across international curricula, advising on SEND, wellbeing and inclusive practice, and is known for delivering practical, impactful training that strengthens outcomes for all learners.

About the Session:

This workshop empowers parents to actively support their child's inclusion journey through strong, consistent home-school collaboration. Guided by a special education consultant, you'll learn how to communicate effectively with educators, understand your child's learning needs, and create shared strategies that promote progress and confidence. Expect practical tools, clearer advocacy skills, and a deeper sense of partnership in your child's educational path.



Dr. Imran Mushtaq

Consultant Psychiatrist & Medical Director

**Medication and the Mind:
Understanding psychopharmacology in relation to
ADHD, anxiety & depression**

A UK-trained Consultant Psychiatrist with over 20 years of experience, Dr Imran has worked in the field of mental health across the UAE, UK, Ireland and Australia. Originally trained as a paediatrician, Dr Imran is known for his calm and compassionate approach with children, adolescents and adults. Holding fellowships in both psychiatry and paediatrics, he has extensive experience assessing and supporting individuals and families in relation to ADHD, autism, learning difficulties, anxiety and depression.

About the Session:

This session explores how psychopharmacology can support children and young people experiencing ADHD, anxiety & depression. Dr Imran Mushtaq will demystify medications and address common misconceptions, explaining how they work and when they may be helpful as part of a holistic, integrative treatment approach. He will also evaluate the efficacy, limitations, and side-effect profiles of these medications. Attendees will gain practical insight to support informed conversations, collaborative decision-making and holistic care alongside educational and therapeutic strategies.



Dr. Alexandra Longshaw

Clinical Psychologist

Autism in Girls and Teens

Dr Alexandra is a UK-trained Clinical Psychologist specialising in supporting children, young people and families. With advanced training in child and adolescent mental health and extensive CAMHS experience, she brings strong expertise in neurodevelopmental and neuropsychological assessment, alongside evidence-based interventions tailored to neurodiverse learners across developmental stages.

About the Session:

This session explores how autism can present differently in girls and teens, with a focus on masking, social dynamics and the subtle signs often missed in school settings. Attendees will gain practical guidance on recognising hidden profiles, understanding the impact of camouflaging on wellbeing and adapting classroom environments to better support autistic girls and teenagers. The session offers strengths-based, culturally responsive strategies that professionals can apply immediately to enhance identification, communication and inclusive practice within their school communities.



Adam Griffin

Occupational Therapist, CEO & Medical Director

Learning to Speak Dragon for Parents: A New Way to View, Understand and Support your Child's Sensory Needs

Adam is a pediatric occupational therapist and CEO of Hakkini in Dubai. With over 15 years' experience, he supports children, families, and schools through practical, compassionate strategies. A trusted voice in the region, he regularly appears in media and speaks at international conferences on inclusion and child development.

About the Session:

This engaging and practical session introduces Learning to Speak Dragon, a fresh and accessible way to understand your child's sensory needs and how these shape their behaviour, emotions, and daily experiences. Through powerful metaphor, real-life examples, and clear strategies, Adam helps parents see the "why" behind challenging moments and respond with confidence. The session focuses on simple, effective ways to support your child at home and in everyday routines, while also helping you work more closely with your child's school. You'll leave with a new understanding of your child—and practical tools to help them feel calm, confident, and ready to learn.

Commitment



We are dedicated and persevere in every undertaking.

Our Values

The JESS Core Values embody the JESS culture of nurture and excellence.

-  Commitment
-  Respect
-  Excellence
-  Care
-  Integrity
-  Curiosity



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