

JESS
Dubai

Inclusion Conference

P R O F E S S I O N A L 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 R O F E S S I O N A L P R O G R A M M E



Book Your Free Ticket [Here](#)

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.

Professional Programme

Content Classification

Selecting sessions - how to plan your personal learning timetable

Inclusion and Wellbeing conferences are not new to the UAE. In fact, over the years, Dubai schools and organisations have proudly hosted an impressive calendar of conferences featuring both local and international speakers.

A unique feature of the JESS Inclusion Conference is our content classification system which has been introduced to maximise the impact for educators at all stages of their careers, including support assistants, teachers, inclusion specialists, Heads of Inclusion and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

To ensure that the nature and complexity of each session is relevant, accessible and suitably stimulating for all attendees, we have asked our speakers to classify their course content according to level of challenge and assumed prior knowledge.

Educators and SENCOs attending sessions in the 'foundations' category can expect to leave with enhanced confidence in their understanding of SEND and inclusive pedagogy, as well as a toolkit of practical skills and strategies to take back to their teams. Sessions tailored for advanced educators and SENCOs will challenge their thinking, deepen their knowledge and refine or enhance their established practices. By choosing to follow the leadership conference track, strategic leads for inclusion and middle/senior leaders will engage in sessions relating to policy development, curriculum and assessment frameworks, and a showcase of alternative education pathways.

When planning their personal learning pathways, attendees are encouraged to refer to the "recommended audiences" key to select sessions which are best suited to their individual level of professional experience and expertise. With a limited number of spaces available for each session, attendees who have a strong preference for specific topics at each time slot are encouraged to arrive early during the registration window in order to secure a place in their preferred sessions.

Professional Programme

Content Classification

Audience	Description / qualifying criteria
Foundations Programme	<p>I am a Class Teacher, Inclusion Specialist or SENCO with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0-5 years' experience, currently working at a school which holds a rating of Very Good or Outstanding in the area of inclusion and wellbeing (i.e. has well-established and embedded inclusive practices and policies); or• 5+ years' experience, currently working in a school which holds a rating of Good Acceptable in the area of inclusion and wellbeing (i.e. policies and practices are still under development) <p>I am a Learning Support or Teaching Assistant with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any level of school-based experience. <p>Relatable and relevant, you will find these sessions will both accessible and achievable for your current level of practice, whilst also providing that 'just right level' of challenge and provocation to ensure you remain stimulated and inspired throughout. These sessions set the foundations for strong, inclusive practice.</p>
Advanced Programme	<p>I am an experienced Class Teacher, Inclusion Specialist or SENCO with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5+ years' classroom experience in a school which holds a KHDA rating of Very Good or Outstanding in the area of inclusion and wellbeing. <p>These sessions offer a unique opportunity for you to take a deeper dive into inclusion, zoning in on more precise aspects of SEND and inclusive pedagogy which you can cascade to colleagues to enhance practices in your setting.</p>
Leadership Programme	<p>I am a Middle or Senior Leader with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct responsibility and accountability for strategic development, implementation of self-evaluation of our inclusion or wellbeing agenda; or• Official oversight responsibilities for our inclusion or wellbeing agenda. <p>These sessions will support you to critically evaluate your policies and provision and form a strategic long-term development plan which supports your school's pursuit of Dubai's Education 33 goals. A unique feature of this conference is the Alternative Pathways Showcase, an area of inclusion which is becoming increasingly prevalent in government publications, agendas and inspections. You are advised to browse the available topics within the leadership programme, signing up to the sessions which will have the greatest impact for your school and students.</p>

Professional Programme Overview

Time	Collective Agenda
8:30-9:20am	Event registration (required for all): Sign-in, Session Selection and Networking
9:30-9:50am	Opening Address
10am -12:50pm	Attendees branch out to follow their personal learning pathways (see timetables below)
12:50-1:25pm	Lunch (bring your own; small selection of pre-packed foods available for purchase)
1:30-3:30pm	Attendees branch out to follow their personal learning pathways (see timetables below)
3:30-3:50pm	Closing Address

Session 1: 10am to 10:50am

Personal Learning Pathways	Speaker	Recommended Audience(s)
Handwriting - Not as Simple as You Think! Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia: Distinct differences from an OT perspective	Nishad Sayyed @ Family First	Foundations; Advanced
From Planning to Producing: Understanding the impact of executive functioning on written expression	Hannelie Yspeert @ Family First	Foundations; Advanced
Raising Children in the iGeneration - Digital Literacy vs dependency, safeguarding and healthy boundaries	Anna White @ Lighthouse Arabia	Advanced; Leadership
Strengths-Based Approaches to Neurodiversity	Dr Leanne O'Brien @ Insights Psychology	Advanced
Pathways Showcase: Our Core Pathway for KS3 and KS4	Bronwyn Van Zyl @ Kings Al Barsha	Leadership

Session 2: 11am to 11:50am

Personal Learning Pathways	Speaker	Recommended Audience(s)
Quality First Teaching: Enhancing access and outcomes through evidence-based practice	Louise Dawson, consultant	Foundations
Learning to Speak Dragon: A New Way to View and Educate Others on Sensory Processing	Adam Griffin @ Hakkini	Foundations; Advanced
The Metacognitive Classroom: Practical strategies to foster high-performance learning at any age	Jason Slater @ JESS	Advanced; Leadership
Pathways Showcase: A Systematic Approach to Establishing Alternative Pathways for Students with Complex Learning Needs	Rob Phillips @ GEMS Metropole	Leadership

Session 3: 12pm to 12:50pm

Personal Learning Pathways	Speaker	Recommended Audience(s)
Understanding ADHD in the Classroom	Nadia Mankani and Angela Marson @ ADHD360	Foundations; Advanced
Interoception in Action: Understanding the hidden sense and designing sensory-responsive school environments	Laura Clifford and Nadia Herb @ JESS	Foundations; Advanced
Medication and the Mind: Understanding psychopharmacology in relation to ADHD, anxiety or depression	Dr Imran Mushtaq @ British Premier Psychiatry & Psychology	Foundations; Advanced
Understanding the Gifted Child: Meeting complex learning profiles effectively	Anna White @ Lighthouse Arabia	Advanced; Leadership
Pathways Showcase: Bridging the gap between mainstream and special education through a collaborative, blended model	Daniela Restrepo, Anuja Upadhya and Teju Sonuga @ The Bridge Learning Centre	Leadership

Session 4: 1:30pm to 2:20pm

Personal Learning Pathways	Speaker	Applicable Audience(s)
Autism in Teens and Girls	Dr Alexandra Longshaw and Dr Dina Bedair @ Insights Psychology	Foundations; Advanced
Creating Inclusive Learning Environments: Small Changes, Big Impact	Jacqueline Baxter @ DBS Emirates Hills	Foundations; Advanced; Leadership
Pathways to Progress: Nurture groups for Maths and English in Primary	Fiona Hanekom and Carly Gulliver @ JESS	Foundations; Advanced
A Brain-Based View of Behaviour: an evidence based approach to effective provision for students with complex behavioural needs	Beth Sargeant and Zoe Phelps @ JESS	Advanced; Leadership
Pathways Showcase: Introducing alternative curriculum and qualifications in secondary	Katie Sexton @ Arcadia	Leadership

Session 5: 2:30pm to 3:20pm

Personal Learning Pathways	Speaker	Applicable Audience(s)
Auditory Processing Disorder Explained	Sarah Darwish @ Genesis	Foundations; Advanced
Blooming Brains: Supporting emotional regulation in children and young people	Nadia Herb and Aliyah Marshall @ JESS	Foundations
AI for Inclusion - Utilising technology to support neurodiverse learners	Steve Bambury @ JESS	Foundations; Advanced; Leadership
The Emotional Curriculum: Supporting social and emotional development as a foundation for inclusive education	Marlene D'Souza @ Keyani Wellness and Shine Child Development Centre	Advanced; Leadership
One Size Does Not Fit All: Personalised learning that proves progress	Emily O'Neill @ JESS	Foundations; Advanced; Leadership

Meet the Speakers

from Our Partner Organisations





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 in Dubai Science Park.

About the Session:

This session will outline 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.



Steve Bamberg

Head of Digital Learning and Innovation at JESS

AI for Inclusion - supporting neurodiverse learners.

Steve is Head of AI & Digital Innovation across JESS Dubai, having worked in education and training for 20 years. Steve has won awards from Apple, Microsoft, GESS, BETT and EdTech Digest for his work integrating technology in learning and professional development.

About the Session:

In this session, Steve will share practical strategies for effectively integrating AI tools into the classroom to support neurodiverse learners in an effective and time-efficient way. By using technology to 'work smarter, not harder' we can personalise lessons and learning to reflect to the needs and interests of our students, without significantly increasing the demands on the teacher. The session will also feature the launch of a new report on AI for Inclusion created through a collaboration between the JESS AI Working Party.



Adam Griffin

Occupational Therapist & Medical Director

**Learning to Speak Dragon for Teachers:
A New Way to View and Educate Others on Sensory
Processing**

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 sensory processing and its impact on a child's learning, behaviour, and participation in school. Through powerful metaphor, real-world classroom examples, and clear strategies, Adam helps educators recognise sensory needs in every child and respond with confidence. The session also supports educators in communicating and sharing this understanding with colleagues and families. Attendees will leave with a new lens for behaviour and simple, effective tools to create calmer, more accessible learning environments where all children can thrive.



Emily O'Neill

Head of Inclusion at JESS Primary (AR)

**One Size Does Not Fit All: Personalised Learning That
Proves Progress**

Emily spent her formative years gaining a Psychology degree and working with the National Autistic Society. She has been the Head of Inclusion at JESS Primary since 2019, helping to shape the school's vision for inclusion and implementing strategic development plans to enhance their provision for Students of Determination.

About the Session:

In this session we will be considering solutions to the question: What happens when differentiation and quality first teaching just isn't enough? We will be exploring personalised planning, modified curriculums and small steps tracking and assessment as an effective approach to inclusive practice that helps you to identify and meet the needs of all children in your classrooms. This session aims to give you food for thought and practical take aways which will allow you to expand or build on existing approaches, without the need for big budget spends, huge overhauls or sleepless nights!



Hanelie Gyspeert

Speech & Language Therapist

From Thought to Text: The role of executive functioning in written expression

Hanelie has been based in Dubai since 2009 and brings over 25 years' experience supporting children, families, and schools. Her expertise includes CAS, autism, ADHD, dyslexia, DLD, and stuttering; integrating narrative-building and interactive approaches to support communication and learning.

About the Session:

This session reframes writing not simply as a literacy task, but as a complex executive-function demand. Drawing on current research and practice, it explores why students who can think and speak effectively often experience difficulty translating ideas into written form. The session highlights the roles of working memory, task initiation, cognitive flexibility, and emotional regulation in writing. It will examine the executive load embedded in typical writing tasks and how this can contribute to disengagement, avoidance, or shutdown. A systems-level lens will support educators to rethink writing instruction, reduce cognitive overload, and create more inclusive pathways for all learners.



Dr. Leanne O'Brien

Educational Psychologist

Strength Based Approaches to Neurodiversity.

Dr Leanne holds a Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology (DAppEdPsy) from the UK, and has over a decade of experience across public and private sectors in both the UK and UAE. As an assessment specialist, she focuses on diagnostic psychological assessments for a wide range of neurodevelopmental differences and learning differences.

About the Session:

This session will explore strength-based approaches to supporting neurodiversity in school settings, with a focus on practical, inclusive strategies that can be applied in everyday classroom practice. Key areas will include understanding neurodevelopmental differences, reducing barriers to learning, and promoting engagement, wellbeing, and independence. Attendees can expect to gain a clearer understanding of how to identify and build on pupil strengths, alongside actionable strategies to support diverse learning profiles effectively.



Robert Philips

Head of Inclusion, GEMS Metropole

A systematic approach to establishing alternative pathways for students with complex learning needs

As the current Head of Inclusion at GEMS Metropole School, and former Director of Inclusion for the Kings Education Group, Rob has led inclusive practice and developed alternative education pathways across multiple settings over the past 15 years. With his combination of clinical expertise and educational leadership experience, Rob is passionate about driving whole-school inclusion strategies, improving outcomes for students with complex needs, and empowering staff with practical, impactful approaches.

About the Session:

This training explores a structured, whole-school approach to establishing effective alternative pathways for Students of Determination with complex needs. It will focus on how to identify appropriate students, design personalised provision, and implement sustainable systems that support both academic progress and wellbeing. Participants will gain practical strategies, frameworks, and real-world insights to help develop inclusive pathways that are responsive, scalable, and aligned with school priorities.



Louise Dawson

Educational Consultant

Quality First Teaching: Enhancing access and outcomes through evidence-based practice

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 equips educators with practical, evidence-based strategies to add to their inclusion toolkit, improving access and outcomes for a diverse range of learners. Led by a special education consultant, it explores high-impact instructional approaches, adaptive classroom practices, and ways to reduce barriers to learning. Participants leave with actionable tools, clearer decision-making frameworks, and renewed confidence in delivering inclusive, research-aligned teaching.



Jacqueline Baxter

Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion) at DBS

Creating Inclusive Learning Environments: Small Changes, Big Impact

Experienced whole-school inclusion leader with 25 years' experience, specialising in SEND, pastoral care, and targeted interventions. Passionate about removing barriers to learning, and creating inclusive, nurturing environments where all students can thrive.

About the Session:

This session will explore practical ways to create truly inclusive classroom environments, focusing on how physical space, routines, rituals and collaborative structures can remove barriers to learning. Drawing on whole-school inclusion experience and real examples of classroom practice, it will challenge participants to reflect on how small, intentional changes can have a significant impact on engagement, behaviour and learner confidence. Attendees will gain actionable strategies they can apply immediately, including approaches to classroom layout, consistency of routines, and fostering effective group work. The session is aimed at education professionals seeking to strengthen inclusive practice across mainstream settings.



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's mental health work spans the UAE, UK, Ireland and Australia. A trained paediatrician, Dr Imran is known for his calm and compassionate approach with children, adolescents and adults. Holding fellowships in psychiatry and paediatrics, he has extensive experience assessing and supporting people 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.



Katie Sexton

Head of Whole School Alternative Pathways at Arcadia

Pathways Showcase: Introducing Alternative Curriculum and Qualifications in Secondary

Katie is an experienced educator with 12 years' experience in inclusive education and alternative pathways. She began her career as a secondary English teacher and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in SEN and Inclusion, along with a Master's degree in Psychology. She now leads the Whole School Alternative Pathways programme at Arcadia British School.

About the Session:

This session explores how alternative pathway qualifications from Pearson, NCFE and ASDAN support students following personalised learning pathways as an alternative to traditional qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels. It outlines how these courses enable progression across KS4 and KS5, celebrating incremental achievement while ensuring all learners leave with recognised qualifications. The session also highlights how programmes can be structured to build confidence, develop key skills and provide meaningful, accredited outcomes in English, maths and vocational learning.



Dr. Alexandra Longshaw

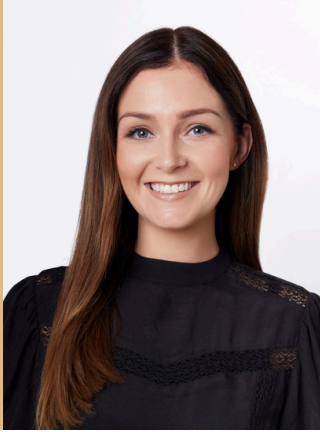
Clinical Psychologist

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, 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. The session offers strengths-based, culturally responsive strategies that professionals can apply immediately to enhance identification, communication and inclusive practice within their school communities.



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.



Bronwynne van Zyl

Assistant Headteacher - Secondary & Head of Inclusion,
Kings' School Al Barsha

Our CORE pathway for KS3 and KS4

As Assistant Headteacher and Head of Inclusion, Bronwynne leads whole-school inclusion through strategic planning, data-informed interventions, and collaboration. With over 20 years' international experience, she drives inclusive policy, staff training, and assessment frameworks that promote equity and access for all learners.

About the Session:

Our CORE pathway supports students working approximately 3-6 years below age-related expectations through highly personalised, bespoke learning programmes. Each student follows an individualised route to achieve meaningful, accredited outcomes while developing key life and academic skills. Alongside this, students remain actively included within the mainstream community, promoting a sense of belonging, social development, and wider school engagement.



Nishad Sayyed

Physiotherapist & Sensory Integration Specialist

HANDWRITING - Not as simple as you think!

Nishad is a paediatric physiotherapist with 27+ years' experience, including 17 in the UAE. Certified in NDT, Sensory Integration, Interactive Metronome, Brain Gym, and Retained Reflexes, she uses an integrative approach combining clinical, school-based, and parent /educator training to achieve functional outcomes.

About the Session:

Handwriting is a complex skill involving both cognitive (idea generation, organization, language) and visual-motor components (tracking, perception, co-ordination, stability, strength and integration). This session aims to enhance educators' understanding of the differentiate between the possible underlying causes of handwriting difficulties and how to identify early signs of handwriting struggles in children. It will discuss the importance of adopting a holistic approach to improve functional and meaningful outcomes for students. Attendees will leave with a toolkit of practical strategies to support handwriting at home and in the classroom.



Jason Slater

Assistant Headteacher, JESS Jumeirah

The Metacognitive Classroom: Practical strategies to foster high-performance learning at any age

With over 15 years' experience in primary education, Jason is an Assistant Headteacher at JESS Jumeirah. He is deeply committed to enhancing teaching and learning through evidence-based approaches. Passionate about developing the whole child, Jason has also contributed to research projects focused on accelerating progress through cognitive strategies in mathematics and the effective use of metacognitive practices.

About the Session:

This session explores the widely used yet often ambiguous concept of metacognition. Commonly referenced as a buzzword within education, it moves beyond surface-level understanding to provide a clear and practical definition of the term. Attendees will gain insight into how metacognitive processes influence learning and academic outcomes. The session also introduces a range of straightforward, evidence-informed strategies that can be readily applied in the classroom, empowering teachers to support pupils in becoming more reflective, independent, high-performing learners and enhancing overall academic progress and attainment.



Marlene D'Souza

Child Psychotherapist

The Emotional Curriculum: Supporting Social and Emotional Development as a Foundation for Inclusive Education

Marlene D'Souza is a CDA-licensed Child Psychotherapist at Keyani Wellness and Shine Child Development Centre. Her practice supports children, schools and families through a developmentally-focused approach that includes counselling, early intervention, social groups, play therapy and parental support

About the Session:

Beneath every thriving learner is a child who feels safe, seen, and emotionally supported. This talk explores the powerful relationship between social and emotional learning and academic outcomes, making the case that emotional literacy is not a supplement to education, but its foundation. With a particular focus on neurodiverse learners, we will examine the role of play as a vehicle for emotional and academic growth, and explore how parents and teachers can work together to create an environment in which children learn and flourish.



Anna White

Occupational Therapist & Director of MHFA

Understanding the Gifted Child: Meeting Complex Learning Profiles Effectively

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 what giftedness looks like in children, including key characteristics and how it presents in the classroom. Anna will address common challenges and misconceptions, including how giftedness may be misunderstood or misidentified. Attendees can expect to leave with an enhanced toolkit of practical classroom strategies to support engagement, learning, and higher-order thinking. Maintaining a holistic view of child development, this session will also highlight approaches to supporting social-emotional needs and recognising when further assessment may be required.

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

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

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: Supporting ADHD Through Whole-Class Practice

This session explores the foundations of ADHD, including how it affects attention, behaviour, and learning in the classroom, and why these challenges often present differently across students. By adopting evidence-based inclusive approaches in their everyday teaching, teachers can reduce the need for separate planning while creating a classroom environment where students with ADHD, and their peers, can all succeed.

Educators attending this session can expect to walk away with an enhanced toolkit of practical and achievable whole-class strategies that support engagement, regulation, and independence for all learners.



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.

A Brain-Based View of Behaviour: an evidence based approach to effective provision for students with complex behavioural needs

This session introduces a neurodevelopmental, evidence-based framework for understanding behaviour in students with complex needs. Designed for school educators and leaders, it will explore how brain development, stress responses, trauma, and unmet needs influence behaviour in the classroom. Attendees will be supported to move beyond 'behaviour as defiance' toward 'behaviour as communication'.

The session will provide a shared language, key neuroscience principles, and practical implications for provision, enabling staff in teaching and leadership positions to respond more effectively, reduce escalation, and build environments that support regulation, relationships, and inclusion.



Beth Sargeant
Head of Secondary
Inclusion at JESS

An experienced Head of Secondary Inclusion at JESS Arabian Ranches, Beth draws on her diverse background in teaching, assessment, psychology and SEND to support a holistic, child-centered approach to inclusive practice. In her time at JESS, Beth has helped to shape the school's vision for inclusion, implementing strategic development plans to enhance the provision for students of determination. With a particular interest in the area of behaviour, social and emotional differences, Beth is keen to develop the skillset of all staff in secondary education to enhance the understanding of and support for the 'whole child'.



Zoe Phelps

Deputy Head of Secondary
Inclusion at JESS

Zoe is an Inclusion Teacher and Deputy SENCo at JESS Arabian Ranches Secondary.

She works closely with students, families and staff to embed inclusive practice, champion neurodiversity, and develop practical systems that support wellbeing, access and achievement across the secondary setting.

Interoception in Action: Understanding the Hidden Sense and Designing Sensory-Responsive School Environments

This session explores the nuanced role of interoception, the body's internal awareness, and its role in students' emotional regulation, learning readiness, and behaviour. We will connect theory to practice by examining how sensory needs appear subtly in classrooms, and how SENCOs, teachers and other professionals can identify early signs of dysregulation.

Drawing on evidence-informed principles, we will guide participants in evaluating their school environments and implementing practical, whole-school regulation strategies that go beyond sensory rooms or equipment. This session equips educators and leaders to design and create proactive, sensory-attuned learning spaces so that all students can thrive.



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.



Laura Clifford
Occupational
Therapist at JESS

Currently working as the in-house Occupational Therapist at JESS Jumeirah, Laura specialises in support for children and adolescents, having worked across clinical and educational settings in Ireland, the UK, and the UAE. Taking a highly practical approach to therapy, Laura's ultimate goal for her clients is to achieve functional outcomes in which result in meaningful improvements in their relevant daily activities. Within a school context, this includes a focus on motor skills development, emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and functional, and classroom accommodations to enhance engagement and participation. Laura also has considerable experience delivering staff and teacher training to promote regulation and engagement in school environments.

Pathways to Progress: Nurture groups for Maths and English at JESS.

Acknowledging that learning is not always linear, with the scope and pace of student learning being highly variable from one child to the next, it is important that our approach to teaching remains adaptable and reflective of the students we have in front of us.

Over the past few years at JESS Arabian Ranches, we have introduced Academic Nurture Groups for English and Maths across primary. The aim of these groups is to enhance access to the UK National Curriculum for students who, due to the nature of their individual learning profiles, would otherwise struggle to meet age-related curriculum expectations alongside their peers. Taking a case study approach, this session will walk through the strengths and challenges faced during this process as well as the impact we have observed in student outcomes thus far.



Carly Gulliver
Inclusion Teacher
at JESS

As an Inclusion Teacher at JESS Arabian Ranches, Carly has over 20 years' experience in education, teaching across FS and Primary settings in the UK and the Middle East.

With a Masters's degree in Inclusive and Special Education, Carly has always had a passion for teaching pupils with SEND as well as those who are new to learning English.



Fiona Hankom
Inclusion Teacher
at JESS

An experienced Inclusion Teacher at JESS Arabian Ranches, Fiona has over 16 years' experience working across a range of international curricula and settings. Fiona brings a broad, well-rounded perspective to teaching and learning in primary school settings, with a strong commitment to inclusive practice, collaboration, and child-centred education.

Fiona is known for her thoughtful, evidence-based approach and her ability to build positive relationships with pupils, families, and multidisciplinary teams.

Bridging the gap - blending clinical services with mainstream education

This session explores how clinical services can effectively integrate with mainstream schooling to support Students of Determination in Dubai's inclusive education landscape. Attendees will gain insight into common barriers to successful inclusion, the role of multidisciplinary collaboration, and the impact of evidence-based interventions such as ABA, speech and language therapy, and occupational therapy. Participants will enhance their knowledge and gain deeper insight into creating more inclusive learning environments that effectively support children's academic, social, and behavioural development.



Founder and Director of The Bridge Learning Center, Teju is an education specialist in SEND with international experience across teaching, educational leadership, and clinic directorship. Teju leads the development of integrated models of support, bringing together clinical, educational, and community-based services. Her approach is grounded in evidence-informed practice and a strong commitment to inclusive systems which enable children and families to thrive.

Teju Sonuga
Founder of The Bridge



Deputy Head of The Bridge Learning Center, Daniela is a certified BCBA and IBA who has worked and trained across the USA, UK and UAE, bringing global expertise to clinical practice and educational leadership. She specializes in delivering clinical services in collaboration with school settings, creating inclusive environments where every child can thrive.

Daniela Restrepo
Deputy Head of The Bridge



As a CDA-licensed Psychologist, Anuja has 8 years' experience supporting children with neurodevelopmental delays, specialising in assessment and multidisciplinary care. In addition to her role at The Bridge Learning Center, Anuja serves as Adjunct Faculty in Psychology at universities while pursuing her Doctorate.

Anuja Upadhyaya
Clinical Supervisor & Psychologist

JESS
Dubai