



▶ Staff and students gather at Harrison College's welcoming campus environment, where every learner is supported to thrive

Harrison College has been recognised at the prestigious GESS Awards 2025 for redefining what inclusive post-16 education can achieve. Based in Doncaster, the specialist college was established in 2019 in response to the 2018 SEND Review in Doncaster, which identified a significant gap in educational provisions for academically able young people, aged 16–25, with autism or SEMH needs. At the time, only three special schools existed, all catering to learners with severe and multiple learning disabilities, leaving a niche group underserved.

Following government plans to allocate additional high-needs funding and SEN capital in 2019/20, Harrison College emerged to address these challenges while aligning with Doncaster's Education and Skills Strategy 2030 and the South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan.

The national context further underscored the importance of such initiatives. With around 700,000 people with autism in the UK, only 22% are in paid employment, and each individual potentially costing £1.5 million over a lifetime in care and lost earnings, there is immense potential for systemic savings and improved outcomes through early intervention and proper support. By equipping students with the skills needed to enter the

workforce confidently, Harrison College not only supports individual independence and well-being but also helps alleviate broader societal and economic pressures.

At the heart of its success lies a simple belief: when education connects directly to opportunity, independence becomes possible not only for learners, but for families and communities too. The award celebrates a model that is changing lives locally while setting an example globally for inclusive education.

Congratulations again on your GESS Award win. What does this recognition mean to you and your organisation?

Winning this award is an incredible honour for our team and our community. Inclusivity is at the heart of everything we do, from our tailored curriculum and supported internships to enrichment activities that empower every learner to thrive. This recognition is not just for Harrison College, but for Doncaster and the UK, showcasing that small, specialist institutions can lead the way globally in inclusive education.

Tell us about your winning project/initiative/product. What inspired its creation, and what challenge were you aiming to solve?



▶ Harrison College graduates proudly hold their awards at the annual graduation ceremony