

INFORMATION ABOUT WESTFIELD SCHOOL

We are currently in the final stages of an LA requested expansion programme to increase our number of children on roll to 96. This is an acknowledgement of the quality and success of our work, a significant investment in the future of the school and an exciting opportunity to further develop our provision.

We are a coeducational Primary Special School. Our pupils will have a Moderate Learning difficulties (MLd) learning profile with significant difficulties arising from a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum disorder (ASd) and/or Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCn). Because of their special needs, we expect our pupils to have displayed behaviours that are significant barriers to their learning when in mainstream school. However, we are not designated to work with children who have a prime need of SEMH.

WORKING AT WESTFIELD

We are a happy, relaxed, team-based school where staff feel valued, their support and training are a priority and children enjoy attending.

We recognise that although enjoyable, starting work at Westfield is a steep learning curve which must focus on developing the technical teaching skills needed. Those techniques and skills (and the theoretical understanding underpinning them) together with the experience gained in their development and practice, are transferable to all learning settings whether specialist or mainstream. This experience places any teaching professional at a real advantage in terms of personal development, broadening future options and career path.

We recognise that we are specialists in our field and that traditional external training does not often meet the needs of staff in developing the provision our pupils require. For this reason, we work closely with a range of professionals and fully use the in-house expertise we have developed to support and extend the skills of new staff.

SURROUNDS AND CATCHMENT AREA

Pupils can be drawn from the whole of Bucks, though the school is most obviously linked with the High Wycombe and Chiltern & South Bucks Areas in the South of the County. We also take pupils from the Unitary Authorities in Berkshire and from other neighbouring Authorities.

The school enjoys a quiet site in a residential area, very close to the village centre with its shops, library and community facilities. The River Thames is a few minutes' walk away.

The school grounds include 3 playgrounds (1 for each learning base). We have a school field; half of which is developed as a large Forest School, a fundamental element of our provision.

The light, well-proportioned school building is well maintained and resourced, and provides a great deal of space, allowing flexibility of use and provision ideal for our pupils. There is also a large PE Hall, dining room, a meeting room, seminar room for training and intervention spaces (used for delivery of aspects of the specialist curriculum and by external professionals) as well as specialist Food Technology rooms.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

The school has 2 pathways with 5 classes in each pathway. The Engagers pathway caters for children experiencing a more severe level of Autism who are developing the joint attention, social cognition and communication needed for academic progress and engagement in a social setting. The Explorers pathway caters for children needing to develop the language skills needed to independently socialise and team within the national curriculum. Within these pathways, children are allocated to classes with regard to their needs-profile rather than chronological age groups. This means that teaching strategies, resources and support can be precisely targeted and tailored to the needs of the pupils and delivery of both the national curriculum and our specialist curriculum can be achieved without the very high levels of differentiation that would otherwise be necessary.

Each class has its own large room with computers and a quiet area for 1:1 work or for pupils to use to self-regulate their arousal levels.

Classes are grouped within Learning Bases so that staff can work as a team to share expertise and provide support to each other. Each class has a minimum of one teacher and two support members of staff. Class size depends on the needs profile of the pupils and is usually between 8 and 12.

The school works closely with external professionals such as Occupational and Speech & Language Therapists so that professional knowledge and expertise is shared and staff always have a range of support available to them. Our own team of specialist staff provide training, supervision and advice to all staff on the delivery of or specialist curriculum and associated interventions.

THE WESTFIELD SCHOOL PUPIL PROFILE

For our pupils, the underlying causes for their behaviours derive from their communication and interaction needs. In mainstream this will have also prevented them from accessing the National Curriculum, social learning and wider school life. This has prevented them achieving expected levels of progress and attainment. For this reason, we aim to provide our pupils with a learning environment and curriculum which addresses their complex learning and communication needs so that real, long lasting and positive changes can be made, so that they make progress towards being independent individuals who can organise and manage themselves as learners and members of a community.

The range of underpinning difficulties experienced by our pupils include:

- Autism
- Speech and language difficulties
- Cognition within the MLD range
- Social thinking and interaction
- Co-ordination, fine and gross motor skills
- Sensory processing
- Attentional deficits
- Inhibition
- Working memory

These difficulties produce a range of cognitive, speech and language, occupational therapy and psychosocial needs which lead to presenting behaviours and difficulties accessing and making progress within the National Curriculum in traditional ways.

In order to support our pupils' access to the National Curriculum at a needs relevant level and effective progress in attainment, learning opportunities and teaching styles must be provided to them in a way which both takes account of, and addresses, their individual needs.

OUR CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is bespoke and written for children within our needs range. It comprises of 6 areas

- Communication, Language & Literacy
- Maths
- Living in the World (based on Humanities)
- Building Me (focusing on Independence, Attentional & Inhibitory)
- PSHE (focusing on Emotion Recognition and Response, Social understanding, staying safe & healthy)
- Forest school

We also use an integrated therapy approach.

We offer discreet and embedded provision across the school day. Our interventions are put in place by external professionals (i.e. Speech and Language Therapists, and Occupational Therapists) as well as staff with specialisations in the Specialist Curriculum (i.e. Working Memory, Thinking Skills, Attentional Control, Inhibitory Control, and the Social and Emotional Curriculum).

At Westfield, we have Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists on site. Our Therapists are part of our school team, working collaboratively with the classroom staff and senior management. The Therapists work with the children individually or in small groups in the classroom as well as in the playground, hall and Forest School. The majority of our interventions and provision are embedded across the school day, put in place by the class staff who are supervised by the Therapists/Specialists. Research shows that for children to make functional, long term progress, an intervention should be embedded in the classroom environment and part of the daily life of the children so that skills and progress are generalised by the child. Our Therapists therefore work with our staff to implement strategies that can be used on a continuous basis throughout the school. Our children are grouped in class groups based on need and the provision which is required to make maximum progress, not by year group. The universal provision in each class will therefore be valuable for all the children in that group. Some children may require additional targeted provision to address a specific, short term target, delivered either by a Therapist or class teachers and assistants, who work under the guidance of the Therapists, to put a specific intervention in place.