



## INFORMATION ABOUT WESTFIELD SCHOOL

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We are currently undergoing an LA requested expansion programme with the potential to raise the pupil number by at least 30%. 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 the cognitive capacity to work within their relevant mainstream age ranges, but on referral will usually be unable to access their cognitive capacity due to the learning barriers they experience. We expect the vast majority of pupils to experience special needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASd), Speech, Language and Communication difficulties (SCLd) together with complex combinations of other associated needs. 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

If you skip to the last page and the extracts from 2015 review of Westfield you'll see we are a happy, relaxed, team-based school where staff feel valued and 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. Through ongoing work and research together with University departments we are also at the forefront of pioneering educational practice driven by evidence-based development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

### 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 a large playground and a smaller Key Stage 1 playground, both with large play structures and other activity areas. We have a school field; half of which is developed as a large Forest School, a fundamental element of our provision. Our membership of Rotakids (an international Rotary Club gardening club) supports the vegetable allotments all the children work on, the various 'eco' areas around the site and our association with a school in Zambia.



The main building is laid out in a quad, with a secluded inner courtyard and pond. 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, an intervention room (used for delivery of aspects of the specialist curriculum and by external professionals) as well as specialist Food Technology rooms.

## SCHOOL ORGANISATION

The school currently has 2 KS1 and 6 KS2 classes. Within those age ranges, 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 otherwise 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 one support member of staff. Class size depends on the needs profile of the pupils but rarely exceeds 6 pupils.

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 in mainstream 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 behavioural 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:

- Attentional deficits
- Inhibition
- Working memory
- Goal oriented behaviours, such as planning, categorising and evaluating
- Empathy

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.

For example, making progress within Key Stage 2 of the writing curriculum requires learners to actively select and apply relevant spelling and punctuation rules; generate and develop ideas in a logical sequence; select and manipulate different forms of language and have an awareness of the



reader's needs and purpose of the text. The executive dysfunctions our pupils experience present a significant barrier to progress in these areas.

Research confirms our experience. "These students have been characterized as "actively inefficient learners" (Swanson, 1989; Torgesen, 1982) because of their difficulties accessing, organizing and co-ordinating multiple mental activities simultaneously in academic areas..." Meltzer, Krishnan 2007.

As the curriculum becomes more complex and conceptually demanding these students find it harder and harder to prioritise and synthesise large amounts of information and become "stuck", unable to initiate new tasks or shift flexibly to alternative approaches.

In order to support our pupils' access to the National Curriculum 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.

When planning the learning to take place in a lesson, staff learn to take into account the profile of language abilities, inhibition and attention in their group of learners. When appropriate, language and working memory are supported by visual cues and resources. However, difficulties in maintaining inhibition and attention which can lead to sensory processing difficulties, also means that visual and auditory stimuli have to be carefully used so that pupils are not aroused to a state that interferes with effective and efficient learning.

Similarly, pupils with difficulties in cuing and shifting attention between tasks and foci find changes between tasks and contexts difficult to manage and careful consideration must be given to managing the transition between learning activities within a lesson. These are just a couple of examples of the ways in which widely held good teaching practice must be adapted and applied to the learners of Westfield to ensure teaching remains reflective and effective in relation to the current group of pupils.

## WHAT AND HOW DO WE TEACH?

We emphasise core skills and teach Literacy and Numeracy as discrete subjects as well as through other subjects. We teach the full National Curriculum (e.g. Science, History, Geography, Art) in the way that most suits the needs of the pupils and staff in that classroom.

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM

This is an area of learning that bridges the National Curriculum and the specialist learning curriculum. Social and emotional learning is a very significant developmental area for all our children and we have created a highly specialised curriculum to meet these needs. It focuses on developing a child's understanding of how they think and feel and respond, and of how other people think, feel and behave, and on the development of positive and constructive social relationships.

## SPECIALIST LEARNING CURRICULUM

The specialist curriculum is designed to target specific learning skills and ways of thinking that affect how well children learn and behave. It is taught throughout the school to all children. It has four areas: Working memory, Attention, Inhibition and Thinking skills.



**In 2015 Bucks LA commissioned Ofsted inspector reviews of all its schools.**

**The following are extracts from Westfield School's report, which judged the school to be Outstanding in all areas.**

(There is a) strong sense of team-working, sharing of practice and shared vision across the school, and in all lessons observed all class staff were seen working as a seamless team... The Learning Support staff are highly valued professionals and are fully involved in the education of the pupils and professional discussions. The therapists visiting the school make a significant contribution ...

Discussion with NQTs, newly appointed and returning staff confirmed the support identified by senior leaders and middle leaders, and the mutual atmosphere of the pursuit of excellent teaching in order to give maximum opportunities to the pupils both in learning and achieving independence. ... This was coupled with an induction process (which is) followed by continued professional support from the senior leaders, middle leaders and other staff in a collegiate learning ethos with mutual advice and support.

A strong feature of the school senior leadership is the continual reflection that they bring to the work of staff with individual and groups of pupils. This has built the school into a learning community. This is felt by all staff and was commented on by the more recently appointed staff, who also commented on the very good support from middle leaders. The middle leaders discussed how their role contributes to this culture. They are keen to continue their self-development.

Pupils' academic progress is outstanding. Progress measured in terms of social engagement, self-management of behaviour, self-awareness of their own needs and the impact of their social interactions on others, and their contribution to a harmonious environment is also outstanding.

The curriculum is well organised and the grouping of children provides a secure learning environment.

Pupils behaviour is relaxed, they enjoy school and learning. Social behaviour at breakfast club was very good. At lunch they had good table manners, talked with each other. Smiled a lot. They welcomed visitors to their tables and were conversational.

If a pupil showed any distress it was picked very quickly and quietly managed. In discussion with pupils they identified that their ability to go to a quiet space under their own judgement and resolve their feelings and return to the lesson was highly valued. They consider their time in the school as valuable and that they get very good teaching.