

Autism Accreditation Assessment

Westfield School

Reference No.	
Assessment dates	Tuesday 15 th June – Thursday 17 th June 2021 + 17 th March 2022 (Observation day)
Lead Assessor	Nikki Kennedy
External Moderator	N/A
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	Yes

Section 1: Context

About the Provision

Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:

"Entire day - School structure and environment is structured to provide and take account of sensory needs. Predictable routines and expectations for children. This allows them to develop personal independence in self-organisation, regulation and reduces anxiety. There is a consistent language used, based in learning through our specialist curriculum e.g. Stop Button (inhibition) and Social thinking feedback.

For more information: <http://www.westfieldschoolbucks.org/>

(Assessment Introduction Form)

Within the Early Years and Key Stage One there are pupils who have limited or no language, which is a new cohort of pupils for Westfield School who traditionally support pupils with language and learning difficulties.

Number of autistic people supported by the provision: 46

Range of autistic people supported by the provision: "Westfield School is a primary age LA maintained special school for children with significant communication and interaction difficulties. The vast majority of children also have learning difficulties associated with a diagnosis of ASC and are within the moderate learning difficulty range. There is a small cohort of pupils who are within the average cognition range who are preparing to transition to secondary school within the next two years."

(Assessment Introduction Form).

Outcome of last statutory assessment (Body; date, outcome):

Ofsted, 2018, Good

About the Assessment

- The assessment took place over 3 days.
- The provision's adviser acted as assessor.
- 18 sessions were observed by the assessment team. These included a range of classroom-based activities; whole school assembly; playtime and mealtime.
- Discussions were held with both teaching staff and therapeutic staff, governors and parent governor.
- Personal files were sampled across each key stage.
- Some key policy documents provided by the provision were read.
- The results of surveys carried out with autistic people and their families were also considered.

Professional Development and Support for Staff

Main approaches or methods employed by the provision in supporting autistic people:

Westfield delivers a specialist learning curriculum which focuses on developing attention control, inhibition, working memory and thinking skills. This is taught explicitly to pupils to enable them to acquire, retain and apply learning.

Social cognition is taught through a specialist social and emotion curriculum which targets emotional recognition and response, social thinking and problem solving. Children are also taught to recognise their arousal levels and use appropriate strategies to help themselves regulate.

In addition to these approaches Westfield uses a wide range of autism specific approaches across the school to develop the skills and abilities of autistic pupils.

Training and professional development staff receive in these approaches and in their understanding of autism:

Westfield have a clear and comprehensive training programme for staff, this has been impacted slightly by COVID in that much of the modelling of practice which was occurring hasn't been able to happen with the restrictions.

Most of the staff team are trained in AET up to Level 4, those which don't currently hold this are expected to have completed the course by the end of the summer term.

On-going support available to staff in working with autistic individuals

Senior Specialist Support Workers spend time with new staff to deliver training and model approaches with staff. In addition, they will share resources and examples of activities to enable staff to continue to use these in their own classroom practice.

Ongoing support and training are available to all staff across the school. Staff reported that they felt well supported by the Senior Leadership Team, SALT, OT and each other. They all felt that communication and support within the school was a real strength and that all questions were valid.

SALT and OT are both available for regular meeting with staff for coaching and mentoring as well as discussions regarding targets and resources. This is in addition to supporting teachers in class by carrying out whole class sessions with pupils.

Each base, group of classrooms, has a really close working relationship and have been bubbled up over the COVID period. Base working involves a group of 2-4 classes working together. Staff and pupils can be interchangeable depending on a pupil need for regulation or a different face if they are finding things difficult. Staff have a relationship with all pupils across the whole base so that they can be effective in providing support where required. This has enabled classes to work together closely when they haven't been able to interact with others across the school. Sharing of skills and strategies of staff will occur during base meetings or at the end of the day.

There is a clear ethos of self-development within the school, staff are encouraged to identify courses and training opportunities. There are also members within the staff team who are being encouraged to complete their teacher training, supported by school.

Video work is used for professional development of staff. Video clips are played of situations within classrooms to enable staff to effectively reflect on their practice in both positive and negative situations which may occur.

In conclusion, Continuous Professional Development ensure that staff have a robust specialist knowledge of autism specific practice methods and approaches related to the needs of the children at the school. Systems are in place to ensure that practice is highly personalised

Section 2: Findings from Assessment

Personal Centred Planning

Brief description of how individual support is planned, implemented and evaluated:

All pupils are assessed when they start at the school and an individual support plan is implemented. This plan is regularly reviewed and updated with input from parents and where appropriate the pupil themselves.

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Communication skills of pupils are identified using a range of assessment tools. This information is formulated and used to create the pen portraits within school. This focuses on communication and social interaction skills. There is a section within the pen portraits which includes subjects which pupils are likely to talk about as a conversation starter for staff.

There is one Speech and Language Therapist employed for three days a week who works really closely with 2 specialist support workers in the school. They will be responsible for delivering programmes alongside class teams as well as one to one and group interventions.

Westfield do a lot of work with the social thinking programme with the older pupils in the school and the language from this is clearly and consistently seen in classroom practice. The SCERTs framework is being used to identify the skills and abilities of the younger children and identify their areas for development and target setting.

A range of programmes are used to support speech language and communication across the school on a one to one, group and whole class basis.

All staff working with the Key Stage 1 children are trained in the use of Makaton and AACs are starting to be used with the appropriate pupils.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Staff were seen to consistently adapt their language to match the communicative abilities of pupils. This was consistently seen to be further supported by the use of visuals to emphasise instructions or information which were being given. This was adapted to meet the needs of the pupils across the school with the use of photos, symbols and Makaton seen to be used consistently across the school.

Autistic pupils were seen to consistently make themselves understood and where requests or directions were presented by pupils this was honoured by staff. During lunch a pupil was learning to experience new foods and was clearly able to communicate following foods he tried that he didn't like them and didn't want to try it again. This was particularly seen during a Forest School observation where the pupils took the lead in the environment and had the confidence to direct staff as part of role play activities which were happening.

Autistic pupils were regularly seen to be provided with opportunities to communicate and interact with each other either in a structured environment or informally in the playground and at Forest School. Where required this was seen to be sensitively scaffolded by staff to support understanding and successful interaction amongst the pupils.

Problem Solving and Self-reliance

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Personal development and independent self-care skills are recorded as part of the Westfield assessment process. It is recognised that pupils make excellent personal development toward functional independence in their self-management, organisation, social and communication skills. This can be seen through the comprehensive data which is collected on each pupil within the school.

When interviewed staff said that they found the complexity of the data collection easy to manage as it is all collected at different points throughout the year and that they liked it because it worked and gave a broad picture of the pupil's progress outside of National Curriculum expectations.

Pupils get the opportunity to develop their skills in a range of situations outside of the school with a wide range of enrichment opportunities available outside of the school provision.

Video work provides pupils with a unique opportunity to problem solve social situations where difficulties arise in the classroom. Pupils engage really well with the staff and are able to effectively problem solve what went wrong in a situation and realise the impact that their behaviour can have on others. They are then supported to problem solve how they could change their behaviour to have a more desired outcome in the future. During the observation one pupil was working with staff to recognise the impact that his behaviour has on his peer group. Staff supported him to look at one pupil in particular, watch his physical reaction to the behaviour and what happened afterwards. This was seen to help the pupil understand the impact his behaviour had on his peers, and that the way they reacted was a direct consequence of what he was doing. The staff and pupil then worked together to establish alternative things to say and ways to interact with his peers.

Transition is carefully considered whether it is an internal transition or a pupil is transitioning into or out of the school. The process is very thorough and robust to ensure that it is smooth and successful for all pupils.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Classroom environments are structured so that pupils are able to independent within them. There are clear places for learning and defined areas where pupils are able to go and regulate when required.

All classes have timetables available, which are adapted to reflect the abilities of the classes by having key times identified against the timetable. This effectively stretched the skills of the pupils and enabled them to begin to be able to tell what time they could go to break and lunch.

In addition to the class timetable there will be an in-task schedule for a carousel of activities when pupils are expected to carry out more than one activity during a lesson. This is made really clear with timers used to define the end of an activity. Warnings were consistently given to ensure that pupils were aware that activities were coming to an end and a transition was coming up. This was seen to be consistently and effectively adapted to meet the differing needs of pupils across the school.

Pupils were seen to be engaged in activities which were meaningful and engaging, and which gave an element of problem solving. Staff were observed to make every opportunity of problem solving throughout their lesson, getting the pupils to think for themselves and work problems out. During the observation's pupils were seen to effectively work their way through the challenge of not having any internet access. This was seen to be supported and scaffolded by staff to meet the differing needs of

pupils and reliance on computers and internet across the school. This was especially seen in the Forest School environment where pupils were observed to be working collaboratively to solve problems they came across.

Pupils at Westfield School have exceptional skills and confidence in expressing their opinion, making decisions and problem solving. Staff encourage pupils at all points during a day to make and take decisions. During one classroom observation pupils had planned what they were to complete during an activity. At Forest School pupils had spent the week planning what they were going to do during their session. Pupils were required to problem solve and change their plans at the last minute due to a change in weather. This was executed incredibly successfully and the problem-solving skills continued to be used and developed once they were in the Forest School environment.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Pen portraits and risk assessments include a range of strategies to support pupils' sensory needs, however these are not always clearly defined as to when to use them to support pupils effectively.

Westfield employ an Occupational Therapist 3 days a week who will provide the majority of interventions in class modelling good practice to staff. Where necessary additional interventions are provided for children and their sensory, play and motor skills. A significant amount of work has been carried out in the Early Years department upskilling the staff to work with a different needs profile ensuring that the pupils sensory needs are fully met.

Staff were able to share examples of how they have effectively supported pupils' sensory needs in the classroom and how these can change in different environments.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

The whole school is highly low arousal with careful consideration having been given to the profile of pupils and their needs. Classrooms have clearly defined spaces with limited clutter.

The Forest School environment provides pupils with a space where their sensory needs are extremely well met enabling them to fully engage in the activities within this environment with limited need to regulate.

Autistic pupils were seen to regularly and consistently engage in activities which were enjoyable or relaxing. Pupils were seen to participate in activities which used all of their senses. This included at lunch time where pupils are given the space to explore new and different foods with their senses without fear of being forced to try.

Staff were seen to consistently provide pupils with opportunities and support to regulate their sensory needs. During more than one observation pupils were encouraged to make a choice about which sensory strategy they used and whether they needed to continue using it.

Westfield make exceptional use of the break out spaces they have and the wider school so that pupils have relevant working spaces for their needs or regulation activities.

Pupils were seen to make the most of the new Westfield mile completing circuits of the course as part of a pre-determined strategy as a movement break. Although this was seen to be facilitated by staff, pupils were seen to be able to participate in this activity independently heading back into classrooms when they were regulated.

Pupils were observed to experience a range of sensory experiences in a safe space. During Forest School many of the pupils got wet, but were offered the opportunity to carry on knowing that they were able to rectify the problem upon going back into the school building.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

All pupils will have a pen portrait and risk assessment which outlines challenges pupils may have and strategies for support.

Pupils pen portraits include the things that pupils like both within and outside of school as well as topics of specific interest which pupils will confidently talk about.

Westfield School explicitly teaches pupils the difference between pro social and anti-social behaviour in addition to expected and unexpected behaviour and the use of these phrases were seen consistently in practice across the school.

Westfield school follow a mindfulness in schools programme supporting the emotional health and well-being of the staff and pupils. They have also achieved the Well-being Award for Schools since their last assessment.

Video footage is extensively used to support pupils in recognition of successful independent self-management skills in addition to support their understanding of anti-social behaviour and developing abilities to problem solve and improve outcomes. Through observing video clips pupils are able to identify and recognise the skills that they have learnt and reflect on different situations in a classroom. This enables them to see what strategies they used and how they coped so that they can see the benefit and utilise them in the future.

All staff are trained annually to ensure consistency of practice. Data shows a significant reduction in restraints which are being used and a large reduction in the frequency and duration of any holds.

Westfield has a robust system of recording both positive and negative changes to a child's behaviour, paper documentation has pen scribbles to show the changes that have recently changed in behaviour ensuring all staff are aware prior to it being formally recorded.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

All pupils at Westfield School present as feeling safe, calm and confident within their environment and in many instances during observations wanted to share this with visitors who entered the room. In many of the classes, pupils were confident to say hello to visitors and share what they were doing in their lessons as I entered the room. During Forest School pupils were confidently able to share what they liked about Forest School and in some instances why they preferred it to classroom learning.

Proactive strategies were seen to be consistently used to great effect in avoiding anxiety, confusion or distress and in lowering arousal levels when pupils were beginning to escalate.

Pupils are supported to regulate their emotions through a range of strategies, there is use of an arousal and emotions wheel across the school which is used in a range of contexts. During observations this was used to assess the emotions and arousal of

the pupils themselves, staff, each other and characters in stories. Staff were seen to consistently use the wheels in their teaching bringing emotions and arousal in all lessons across the school.

It was observed that there was a clear respectful and trusting relationship between the pupils and all the staff within the school. These relationships were not just with the class team but with many other staff members across the school who knew all the pupils and how to interact and work with them effectively.

Pupils are encouraged to try new activities or learn new skills in a range of environments or people across the school. This is part of embedded practice at Westfield, encouraging pupils to work outside of their comfort zone enabling them to experience a sense of completion and achievement in all they do.

There is a graduated reward system within the school where pupils are able to earn on the spot awards through to certification and prizes which take longer to achieve.

Consultation with Autistic People

Pupils across the school are primarily verbal and therefore their views are obtained throughout the school day in any number of circumstances and contexts. During lunchtime observations pupils were clearly making choices and voicing their opinions about what they would like for lunch and the foods they did not like.

Choosing times are a regular feature in many classrooms where pupils are provided with the opportunity to make a choice regarding the activity they would like to do. In addition to this during one observation pupils structured their own learning during a lesson deciding on which activities they would like to complete and in what order.

Consultation with families of Autistic People

The school have significantly developed their working relationships with families. The Friends of Westfield is now well established and works alongside the Senior Leadership Team in the school. Most of the parents are part of Friends of Westfield and they have regular meetings with training provided where required. SLT from school can sit in on these meetings. Friends of Westfield have also set up What's App groups with parents in bases so that they are able to communicate and offer support to each other.

Teachers shared how they have regular communication with families via email and telephone. This will include both positive and negative news about how the pupils are getting on.

At key events during the year pupils are provided with opportunities to purchase small gifts for family members. This is all organised by Friends of Westfield and although has needed to be adapted over COVID has continued.

Westfield School has a parental liaison who will carry out specific pieces of work with families to support them at home, this will be targeted work

Both the OT and SALT reported having contact with families.

Involvement with the wider community

Westfield School are heavily involved in the provision for autistic children and young people in Buckinghamshire. This started with supporting the development of Alternative Resource Provisions (ARPs) in both primary and secondary settings. At a strategic level the Head Teacher is working with the Local Authority to develop a hub model of schools for support. This will include SEN provisions, ARPS and mainstream schools. This has further developed into working with local health services and social care.

Westfield school are having a significant impact on the wider community through delivery of training and the creation of standards for community services to work towards. E-learning modules have been created for all staff at Buckinghamshire Council. A module has been created on autism to be delivered on courses at Bucks New University.

A survey has been completed to ascertain the views of autistic children and young people within Bucks with a view to understanding what they want and need within the community. The next step is to support children and young people so that they are able to successfully access clubs and leisure activities within the community.

Section 3: Summary of assessment

What the provision does particularly well

What stood out as particular strengths:

Westfield School empower and nurture each individual pupil so they are able to develop their individuality and progress to achieve positive outcomes both at their school and in the future.

Pupils at Westfield School show exceptional problem-solving skills which are developed effectively through the implementation of enquiry skills which was seen consistently in practice across the school.

The work that Westfield School are doing with the Local Authority is having a significant impact on many of autistic children and young people within Bucks through the development of provisions and training of staff.

What else the provision does well:

Video work is an extraordinary tool that enables both staff and pupils to reflect on situations that have happened in the classroom in a way which enables staff and pupils to problem solve events, but also used to show examples of pro social behaviour.

Base working continues to be an area of strength within the school. It allows for a shared and collaborative working relationship between classes. The sharing of ideas, strategies, approaches and lessons is part of everyday practice. It was also observed that staff and pupils felt comfortable and confident across the bases and was seen to be used for regulations and positive interactions between pupils.

The specialist curriculum which centres around attention control, inhibitory control, maintain attention, working memory and thinking skills, emotional recognition, and response to emotions is clearly embedded across the school, pupils and staff use the resources and language consistently in both classroom and non-classroom practices. This enables pupils to understand expectations and follow directions from all staff across the school as well as effectively building their skills in these areas for real world application.

Westfield School record the positive outcomes and progress of pupils across a range of strands in both academic and personal development.

Westfield School continue to consistently use timetables, task boards and timers in all their classrooms to effective use. This is highly adapted to meet the needs of pupils which enables pupils them to understand what is expected of them throughout the day and during activities. Tools are adapted and reduced as pupils gain skills and manage themselves independently. Visual tools are used in all elements of the school day. Additionally, staff have the expectation that pupils are able to carry out tasks independently and consistently give them the opportunity to do this, before providing support.

Westfield School have a fully embedded approach in the identification of arousal levels and emotions that enables pupils to successfully identify how they are feeling. This helps with ability to regulate and pupils were regularly seen to identify the need to regulate and either be supported to do so or to carry out regulation activities independently.

Pupils at Westfield are effectively supported in their communication, pupils who are verbal show the confidence to consistently express their opinions, navigate the social world effectively both within and outside the school communities. There is an ethos of sharing through communication. Where pupils are non-verbal staff are seen to consistently provide opportunities for communication and this is encouraged at all times through the school day.

What the provision could develop further

Within the Apple classes Westfield could consider how they adapt their visuals to provide greater structure to the times where pupils are expected to choose their own activity.

Parent Comments

*"There are some great courses offered by school to Parents but they are always during the working day so not always possible to attend. Would love some more classes or guidance on ways to support *****'s learning at home. Overall a fabulous school & amazing staff."*

"My daughter is thriving being at Westfield school I have never seen her happier the support she gets is always above and beyond."

"The provision given at this school is outstanding."

"My son has changed so much since he started at Westfield. He has changed for the best, is now out of night pull ups talks a lot more physical needs are improving. Westfield is the best place for my son, it will be a shame when the day arrives for him to leave."

*"***** has become more confident since joining Westfield the staff are a credit to the school"*

"Extremely supportive to us as a family. Thank you."

*"My son came into Westfield school just over 2 years. I have seen a great change in ***** in this time. Academically he is very behind but what concerns me most about ***** his emotional welfare he is a very sensitive boy. He also manages to control himself so much better now too."*

"Staff are so welcoming and always happy to make time to discuss my child. Their knowledge and understanding of special needs is what makes the school such an incredible setting for the children to simply be themselves and thrive. We have nothing but praise for the teaching staff, support staff, office team, leadership team and the school premises too."

"Very happy with the school provision. Best decision made to send my son to this school."

"Since my child has attended Westfield my child's behaviour has improved. The school is supportive and understanding in their care. I would highly recommend Westfield to anyone in need of a specialist school."

"My little boy is now a happy school boy after nearly a year out of education as he could no longer cope with a mainstream environment. The change in him is amazing and he has made such amazing progress in a short space of time. His anxiety which is very significant is really well managed. He is now happy to go to school and puts on his uniform really well. This is an immense achievement after nearly a year of school refusal! The staff are amazingly supportive."

*"We are so pleased how ***** has settled in and the support the school have given. We can hardly believe it and have seen a real positive change in *****. Please carry on the good work."*

"My son has settled brilliantly at Westfields and has made such an improvement since he started in September 2021"

"The school is hard working and creative in meeting my sons needs. We are pleased with the relationships and progress he has made."

*"We are absolutely delighted by the support provided by the staff at Westfield school. The teachers and staff are super pragmatic and understand exactly how to support our son's complex needs.
Thank You Westfield Management, teachers and staff!"*

"Always informed Fantastic staff, keep up the good work. Thank you"

"Couldn't wish for a better setting for my child. School staff is always committed to ensure my child is safe and supporting my child to her best ability as well as the support they also give parents/ carers. Any additional support which may be needed they are always willing to take time to ensure we as parents / carers get the support/ advice."

"Seesaw App they use is brilliant! We now hear much more about what he is doing during the day and the pictures help us talk about his day. Thank you"