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Specialist school Sixth Form students inspect their new building

PUPILS from Autism Unlimited's Sixth Form have been surveying their exciting new base, phase one of which is due to open in September.



BESPOKE BUILDING – Robbie Piper (front centre) and some of his fellow students and teachers from Autism Unlimited's Sixth Form have been surveying their new base in Airfield Road, Christchurch.

Autism Unlimited, based in Parley, is a leading regional charity which provides specialist education, care and support to autistic children and adults.

The charity's Portfield School, in Parley, supports primary and secondary school students aged 4-15.

Its Sixth Form has outgrown its current base and the charity has taken on a large part of a building in Airfield Road.

Major refurbishment is now underway to install classrooms, workshop areas, a kitchen and dining area and outdoor space in time for the first class to move in at the start of the Autumn term.

Siún Cranny, CEO of Autism Unlimited, said: “This was the student’s first visit to the new Sixth Form site and despite it being a work in progress, they were all very impressed and are very much looking forward to moving in and making it their own unique space.”

Students attend Sixth Form between the ages of 15 and 19 and the focus starts to look beyond school life and onwards to accreditations and preparation for life post-education.

Siún continued: “Exploring the world of work and career and achieving fulfilment in adulthood are integral to Sixth Form, as well as wellbeing – healthy lives and healthy networks and relationships.

“Every student is encouraged to undertake work experience and also benefits from expert career advice and support from the skilled Sixth Form team.

“Sixth Form is also a time for exploring personal independence and at this stage, students develop their understanding of meal preparation, cleaning and handling money in different situations outside of the classroom.

“The new building will provide a fantastic environment which is meaningful and welcoming for students at this crucial time in life when it is so important to recognise they are maturing and need a base which inspires and engages them.”

Classes will move into the new building in phases up until the end of the year. The new location also offers the opportunity to establish links with the local business park and the wider area for possible work experience.

Student Robbie Piper, 17, said: “I think it’s going to be ten out of ten when it’s finished. There will be lots more room for us and a proper kitchen, good outside space and even a gym. I want to learn to drive, become an engineer and have my own house when I am older, so studying here is going to help me a lot.”

Charlie Green, 16, agreed: “It’s going to be like coming to a totally new school. It will be a proper Sixth Form for us.”

Ends

Picture captions – Students from Autism Unlimited’s Sixth Form have visited their new building at 1 Airfield Road, Christchurch. The base is currently undergoing major refurbishments ready for the first phase of its opening in September.

Information for Editors:

Autism Unlimited employs nearly 500 people across the South of England.

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