

Autism Unlimited's new Sixth Form shortlisted for national award.



Autism specialist charity, Autism Unlimited, has been shortlisted for a national award for its transformation of a former Christchurch car parts warehouse into a stunning new Sixth Form.

[Autism Unlimited's](#) Portfield School Sixth Form is a finalist in the Change Project of the Year category of the [Charity Times Awards 2024](#).

The building in Airfield Road, formerly used by a neighbouring business, now comprises a state-of-the-art learning hub, a professional kitchen for health and nutrition training, an in-house gym area, music recording studio and an actor in residence to enable students to study drama and work in theatre.

The Charity Times Awards, now in their 25th year, celebrate best practice in the UK charity and not-for-profit sector.

Siún Cranny, CEO of Autism Unlimited said: "It's hugely gratifying for everyone involved in the project to be nominated for this award, and well-deserved recognition of the amount of hard work which has gone into creating this wonderful place."

She continued: "Whilst Autism Unlimited had a small existing sixth form, we wanted more for our students. We set ourselves an ambitious 18-month time frame for the refurbishment, but the vision had been developed over years.

"Many of our students are now confidently seeking paid employment and college places to pursue their interests. Others now have the support they need to focus on their individual passions."

Portfield School Sixth Form will increase its roll to 35 in September 2024.

The full curriculum includes functional skills in English, maths and digital, Prince's Trust Personal Development and Employability Skills, ASDAN, RSHE, Preparation for Adulthood, and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

The winners of the Charity Times Awards 2024 will be announced at a ceremony in London in September.

Here's a link to a video to hear from students first-hand about the difference that this Sixth Form has made to their lives: <https://youtu.be/ZuTYn7RL9ew>

Ends.

Picture caption: RECIPE FOR SUCCESS - Celebrity chef Lesley Waters (third from left) officially opened Portfield School Sixth Form on March 22. She is seen here with Sixth Form student Jack, Sixth Form Home Economist and Chef Steve James, Sixth Form student Luke, and Jan Banks of Christchurch Rotary Club.

www.autism-unlimited.org

Information for editors:

Autism Unlimited exists to create unlimited possibilities for autistic people. We do this by supporting autistic children, young people, adults, and their families with bespoke education, independent living skills, advice, and guidance.

Autism Unlimited also manages Portfield School for primary and secondary school students aged 4-15 in Parley.

The Portfield School Sixth Form kitchen, outdoor trampoline and sensory garden, together with the recording studio have all been possible thanks to a number of grants and individual donors, including a £10,000 donation from the Talbot Village Trust, £5k from The Clingan's Trust, £500 from Christchurch Rotary, £3160 from Nationwide in Bournemouth and £500 from Little Lives UK via the Christchurch Living Advent calendar.

The Charity Times shortlisting comes just a month after Autism Unlimited's Futures provision for 18-25-year-olds won a Certificate of Excellence in the Pearson National Teaching Awards 2024.

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