

Autism Unlimited's new sixth form building is fit for purpose with dedicated gym proving especially popular

Students are benefiting from a wide range of facilities at Autism Unlimited's new sixth form building in Christchurch.

They include personal training sessions in a dedicated gym.

Leading charity Autism Unlimited provides specialist education, care and support to autistic children, young people and adults.

Sixth form at Portfield School starts to focus beyond school life and onwards to accreditations and preparation for life post-education.

Having outgrown its previous location in Christchurch, Autism Unlimited took over a former warehouse in Airfield Road in 2022.

It has since undertaken an ambitious redevelopment programme.

Along with classrooms, workshop areas, a kitchen, social area and outdoor space, the building includes a recording studio and a gym, where personal trainer Adam Blackwell owner of Full Effect Fitness, is hosting weekly sessions.

Adam said: "I've been working with the students since November last year and I have been really impressed by their eagerness to learn and the steady progress they are making through their tailored fitness programmes.

"As a Level 2 Cross Fit coach, I have been instructing them in functional exercise, including lifting equipment like boxes and sandbags.

"The gym is well kitted-out and this keeps activities both interesting and challenging.

"We work flexibly with the time length depending on what suits the student that day.

"I've been pleased to hear they've been practising outside our sessions too.

"Their form is great, and this will serve them well as they progress with their fitness into adulthood."

Siún Cranny, CEO of Autism Unlimited said: "Exploring the world of work and careers and achieving fulfilment in adulthood are integral to our approach at Sixth Form.

"Wellbeing, healthy lives and positive networks and relationships are crucial to our students, who impress us more every day.

"We needed an innovative and nurturing space to engage our students and we have been hugely fortunate to have the support of BCP in creating this exciting development.

"The new building provides an environment which is meaningful and welcoming for students at a key stage of their lives, as they prepare to embark on adulthood.

"They love it because it is their design. It is a true example of positive co-production.

"It's wonderful to see them so active in the gym and they're working hard with results already.

"With Adam's help we hope they create a lifelong passion for health and fitness."

Portfield School Sixth Form will be officially opened on Friday March 22.

Celebrity chef Lesley Waters will be spending the day cooking and discussing healthy eating and meal planning with students in the kitchen.

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

- If you are interested in finding out more about how you can get involved or donate to the work of Autism Unlimited, please email Carol Borwick at: Borwick@autism-unlimited.org

Ends

Picture captions: Fitness instructor Adam Blackwell (in green) putting Autism Unlimited's Portfield School sixth form students (from left) Kai, Robbie and Oliver through their paces in their new purpose-built gym.

Portfield School sixth form student Robbie works out in the new gym.

www.autism-unlimited.org

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