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Specialist school celebrates first Duke of Edinburgh Award success

Portfield School in Christchurch, which provides education for over 100 autistic children and young people, is celebrating its first Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award recipients.



BRONZE ACHIEVERS - Portfield School embarked on its first DofE award scheme with a group of 11 of its Sixth Form students in September 2021. As part of the award the students took part in an overnight camping expedition.

Portfield School is owned and operated by the charity Autism Unlimited and provides specialist teaching and care for students aged 4 to 19 who have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis (ASD).

Portfield School embarked on its first DofE award scheme with a group of 11 of its Sixth Form students in September 2021.

The scheme requires participants to meet objectives in volunteering, physical challenges and skills. It requires them to organise an expedition which they must take part in and complete a goal which has been set for them.

If successfully completed, the programme leads to a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Portfield School's Forest School Leader, Damian Brown led the Bronze award students.

Damian said: “We started our preparation with some hikes in Corfe Mullen, Ferndown and Beaulieu. We built shelters and a bridge and read maps and then hiked and camped for our expedition.”

Sixth Form student Robbie Spicer said: “We started our two-day expedition near Moors Valley Country Park and over two days we walked 15.5 miles to Upton Country Park in Poole, camping and cooking overnight.

“It was a lot of walking and very hard work. But it was also fun and I enjoyed learning orienteering. I’m really looking forward now to moving on to my Silver award and then my Gold.

“I also enjoyed the volunteering part of the award and helped out as part of the Brew Crew in our mobile coffee bar.

Damian continued: “The DofE scheme is designed to challenge young people. Our students have varying abilities and some have different needs, but all have shown real initiative in developing problem solving skills which have really helped as they have progressed through the scheme.

“These new skills will also help our students as they move into work and more responsibility.

“We are all now looking forward to facing the challenges that the Silver and eventually the Gold awards will bring.”

Ends

www.autism-unlimited.org

Picture captions: BRONZE ACHIEVERS - Portfield School embarked on its first DofE award scheme with a group of 11 of its Sixth Form students in September 2021. As part of the award the students undertook an overnight expedition.

Information for Editors:

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme was founded in 1956 by the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Portfield School is a non-maintained special school which was founded in Southbourne, Bournemouth in 1971 by parents of autistic children.

Autism Unlimited is the leading regional charity providing specialist education, care and support to autistic children and adults.

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