



Westfield Academy

*“Not just about sport, but a comprehensive site development plan”*

Key Project Data

Type of School: Academy (converted on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011)

Size: 821 (11 -16 yr olds)

Local Authority: Somerset County Council

No. of Community Users: approx 350-600 per week (during term time)

Location: One of three secondary schools serving Yeovil, a town with a population of 40,000.

The school resides in the second most deprived postcode in Somerset, with social housing in the immediate vicinity but the catchment also includes some private housing including neighbouring villages.

*“We are confident it will be a popular community venue”*

Project Background

Westfield Academy (previously a Community School) has a strong history of community use but it's mainly 1960s buildings have limited the opportunities. They are currently undergoing a site development programme to transform the school for the benefit of both students and the wider community. The trigger occurred 18 months ago, when a local netball club became homeless and requested use of the school's 1960s tarmac tennis courts which had no floodlighting and dilapidated fencing. The club and school worked in partnership and within one year had successfully secured funding for an all weather tarmac and floodlit MUGA for 4 netball / 6 tennis courts. Funding came from the school, the local authority and a Sport England Inspired Facilities grant of £60K (SE funded half the total cost of £120K).



## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY

During this process, the Head of PE was supportive but questioned if the facility was going to be in the best location. This led to the Governors deciding to create a site development sub-committee which have since met 20 times in the last 18 months. The Site Development Group includes representation from the Local Authority, Local Residents Association and school staff. Local Councillors and County Councillors have been kept informed of the plans and developments.

They have created a site development plan which has four parts:

- 1) Arts facilities
- 2) Sports facilities
- 3) General Education
- 4) Infrastructure

Rapid progress has been made regarding the arts facilities and the school are currently refurbishing an existing building and transforming it into a music suite with a recording studio, ICT suite, six rehearsal rooms and an instrument store. This has been funded by their academy grant and the school have saved money by using a local builder and their own staff as an in-house project team. The new arts facilities will be open in September 2013 and will be available for use by the local community (with a school technician overseeing the use of the equipment).

The site group have been working on two Sports facility projects. Firstly the vacated music classroom is being converted into a dance studio with sprung floor which will be ideally situated next to the drama studio. A consultation process has taken place and three local theatre groups, two dance schools and the Local Residents Association have all expressed an interest in using the studio as a community facility. The community groups specified that it would need its own toilets and catering so these have been included in the plans. The dance studio conversion will be part funded by a grant from the County councillor for the area (£3,000). Grants have also been applied for from a community housing provider (£6,000) and the local district council (£12,500). The dance studio will open in January 2014. The business plan includes heavy use of these facilities and the school are confident it will be a popular venue and used by community groups every night of the week. Dance is very popular with the students at Westfield Academy, the school deliver a BTEC in performing arts, have their own dance teacher and offer a range of dance clubs and classes.

The second Sports project involves improvements to the current 1960s sports hall which is in poor condition with a leaking asbestos roof, poor lighting, and some minor water damage to the floor. The original boiler is in poor working order and the fixed equipment and fittings are also



## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY

in need of replacement. The school were planning to simply refurbish the existing hall, but as a result of research and consultation carried out by the site development group there are now more ambitious plans in place.

The site group have identified that there is currently no public access to high quality sports halls in the Yeovil area and they aspire to refurbish the current hall and build an additional 4 court hall for netball and basketball at premier standard (with additional run off). The space in between the two halls will become a Community Centre and will house a reception, toilets, changing rooms, cafe, classroom, offices, meeting room and a fitness suite.

An architect has been contracted to develop some initial concept designs, and the initial feedback has identified changes needed around the design of the community use area.

*“We have a Unique Selling Point”*

The ‘unique selling point’ for Westfield Academy will be the opportunities presented by two adjacent sports halls, one with a higher specification to fulfil the needs of local clubs. A key issue identified by local clubs is not having access during the school day but with two sports hall they could run school and community use simultaneously. The local Netball Club that currently use the MUGA require an indoor facility to move up to the next level, but the schools current hall does not have the required run off.

The refurbished sports hall will use existing changing and new changing would service the new larger hall. A classroom type space in the community building would be used for a health clinic, advice centre, coaching and some non sporting activity.

### Facilities available for Community Use

Current:

Sports Hall - 4 Badminton Court Sized (but roof to low and lighting to poor to accommodate Badminton clubs)

Main Hall

MUGA – Floodlit 4 Netball/ 6 Tennis Court Sized

Redgra – with potential to convert to floodlit MUGA

Sports Pitches



## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY

Planned:

Dance Studio (opening Sep 2014)

Additional 4 Court Hall with community facilities (subject to funding)

### Types of Community Users

Yeovil Netball Club is based at the school with adult and junior sections including student members. The school are also a match venue for netball summer league. The current sports hall is used 15-20 hours per week for community/ club use including cricket and 5 aside football with clubs ranging from casual pub clubs to more structured clubs.

The main hall is currently used by a diverse range of clubs and groups including line dancing, Taekwondo, Gymnastics (members ranging from 5-19), belly dancing, table tennis and Zumba.

The external sports pitches are used by Pro Zone Youth Football.

### Management Model

Community use is currently managed in-house by the School Business Manager with the Finance Officer taking bookings, showing potential groups around the facilities and issuing invoices. An evening caretaker is employed by the school to open and close the facilities and provide security on site.

The school acknowledge that they would need to change the way they manage community use with the opening of the new facilities and they are looking into setting up a trading subsidiary company which would be wholly owned by the academy.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (the County Sports Partnership for Somerset) have offered to part fund a Sports Development Officer post to be based at the school and develop use of the new community sports hall.

The school currently don't proactively market the facilities and price them competitively – the Sports hall is £20 per hour (compared to £35-50 per hour in the area) and the netball court is £15 per hour for 2 courts, or £30 per hour for the whole MUGA including floodlighting.

Charges are discretionary, for example there is a social inclusion project that runs 5 aside football at the school and the Academy do not charge for the use of the hall as the project is addressing specific local health issues.

## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY



*"We anticipate regional interest in our sports venue"*

### Making it work

#### **Design**

The current sports hall is situated near to the main school but in a separate building and the plan is to link this to the new sports hall by a community building with designated community car parking and footpath routes. There will be one foyer area for the sports halls but with distinct changing rooms for community use and a highly visible staff presence in the reception area (from the Centre Manager and PE staff) for safeguarding purposes. Both halls would have community use on an evening, and one hall would have community use during day.

The new sports hall will be an enlarged size of 858 sq m to accommodate safety margins and official and team benches for Premier Netball with a spectator area on one side of the hall. The community area will be 900 sq m. The community block will be two storey with viewing galleries into both halls, therefore if a competition was running, an official could view both halls simultaneously.

#### **Practicalities**

Westfield Academy currently use their own cleaners on site. The new business plan has allocated additional costs for cleaning the additional areas and continuing to employ an evening caretaker. The school envisage they will require a dedicated Centre Manager.

#### **Ethos**

When the school converted to academy status they planned to rebrand and change their name. However the consultation process revealed that most students and the local community wanted to keep the name Westfield as that is the name of the surrounding estate and they felt they should be proud of their history and where they have come from. This is recognition that the school truly is at the heart of the community it serves, which is in an area of low aspirations. It was therefore important for the school to ensure the Residents Association were represented on their site group (the Academy's Head Girl is also chair of the junior section of the Residents Association). The school see the new community sports centre as an opportunity to improve the life chances of their students and the local community and therefore have targeted sports that reflect local interest in Badminton, Gymnastic, Netball and Football (as identified in a consultation process). The school intend to attract local and regional clubs with established and well organised activity as well as an element of 'pay as you play'. They are anticipating regional interest in the venue due to the attraction of being able to offer two sports halls alongside each other.



## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY

### Finance

Westfield Academy are currently exploring a number of potential avenues for partnership funding including;

- Identifying some of their Academy funding
- South Somerset District Council Section 106 monies
- Investigating the sale of two pieces of land for housing, which are on the margins of the school site and not currently in use (site of an old infant school which is now demolished).
- Viridor credits (as a landfill site is 10 miles from school they are eligible for community funding)
- National Governing bodies of Sport (the school are currently confirming their priority sports)
- Sport England

*“Providing the right combination of quality facilities and partner clubs”*

### Main Challenges

- 1) Bringing together the right partners with the right funding in the right timescales.
- 2) Land disposal could be an issue, as on a map it appears the school will be losing green space but the areas are not usable spaces.
- 3) Local and County Councillors are supportive of the project, however the District Council have plans to develop a ‘Sportszone’. Although this would be offering different facilities, the District Council project may compete with the school for local authority and Section 106 funding, particularly during a time where budgets are being stretched.
- 4) There is not currently enough car parking on site, and also there is land available for community car parking, cost could be an issue.

### Benefits

Providing high quality facilities and developing strong relationships with clubs should improve the self esteem and achievement of students. The strength of the PE department is in Sports Leadership, and the school already have 14-16 year old netball officials, football referees and Gym and Athletic coaches. The project will increase these opportunities and should therefore improve the confidence and employability of students.



## Creating a sporting habit for life

## CASE STUDY

The school also aim to improve Post 16 levels of participation with the right combination of clubs and good facilities leading to healthier lifestyles. The significant investment in sport should instil a greater sense of pride in the school and community in general.

### Top Tips

- 1) Set up a Governors working party/ site group – this was vital to engage community partners and bring everyone on board from the start.
- 2) Keep in constant dialogue with your Local Authority, Sport England, Council Bodies, and Sports Group – you may sometimes feel like you are repeating yourself and not getting anywhere, but they will go away and think about what you have said and come back with suggestions/support.
- 3) Develop a comprehensive school site development plan, rather than looking at sport in isolation.

### Contact details

Mark Payne – Business Manager

[mpayne1@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:mpayne1@educ.somerset.gov.uk)