

# High Schools for Athletes Research Project

Case Study Three

Westfields Sports High School, Sydney



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## Westfields Sports High School, Sydney

“First in Australia”

### Introduction

Established in 1963, Westfields High School became Australia’s first officially designated sports school in 1991. The school has a current enrollment of 1551 students and operates as a public high school with a large specialist Talented Sports Person programme across over a dozen sports.

To qualify for enrollment, students must either live within a relatively small local catchment area in the surrounding district of western Sydney or, to enroll within the school’s Talented Sports Programme, students must qualify as a talented athlete through a series of criteria relating to a record of outstanding sport performance and the successful completion of a trial. For all students, a sound academic and personal conduct record are also prerequisites to admission.

### Facilities

In addition to the facilities normally associated with a large high school, the campus contains extensive sport training and competition amenities – an indoor sports arena, a gymnasium and weights room, hockey pitches, a FIFA approved synthetic training facility, tennis courts, a dance and drama studio, cricket nets and an athletics track.

There are 109 teachers and 27 professional sport coaches at Westfields, including seven who have been selected for national and state coaching positions.

### Additional support

Student welfare is a central to the school’s management and function, and the school has implemented a universal reward and recognition system to “catch students being good”, to create a supporting culture across all of Westfield’s activities that encourages individual and co-operative achievement. The Principle, Roger Davis, describes the school’s approach as, “One that trains the whole person, it’s not just about what happens on the athletics track.”

This sentiment is echoed by a student, quoted in the 2012 school prospectus as saying, “I’ve been at Westfields since Year 7. It’s a great feeling. They allow you to get a balance of sport and academics.”

A professional sports medicine and therapy practice operates on site, for students and a wider private practice clientele.

## Curriculum

For all students, the achievement of their best possible academic performance is the main objective. A significant proportion of the student body graduates into university – in 2012 over 100 students graduating from Westfields gained entry to higher education.

The size of the school allows it to operate a very diverse curriculum of high school subjects, and has been recognized with the receipt of the Director General's Award for Outstanding Teaching and Learning Programmes. The school consistently ranks within the top 5% of schools in New South Wales in terms of value added academic performance.

## Partnerships

The majority of Westfield's network of external partners are within the educational or sport development sectors rather than in the commercial sector. The school incorporates an outward-looking and international perspective in its academic and sporting work. A comprehensive programme of overseas sporting and cultural tours takes place annually, in recent years encompassing twenty countries across four continents. The school has also developed strong links with Kasukabe High School in Japan and annual exchanges have taken place since 1997.

In 2008 the International Olympic Committee awarded Westfields High School the Sport and Youth Trophy 2008, in recognition of its longstanding commitment to the development of young athletes. Direct links have also been established with the Australian Institute of Sport, universities and major sporting associations.

## Suggestions

Westfields is a strong example of a large high school that consistently produces internationally significant academic and sporting results. It is a proven model that has endured over a long period of time and has since been replicated across Australia and further afield. The success factors that contribute to the school's ongoing eminence are the result of years of planning and development; excellent links to the regional and national sporting community, experienced and talented staff and a proactive culture of student reward and recognition.

For other institutions seeking to sustainably replicate the Westfields success story, it is worth noting the school's strong focus on the academic development of its students. This priority is viewed as complimentary to the sporting success of the school's pool of talented young athletes. In a student welfare focused culture, reinforced at all levels by a large network of specialist support, Westfields has created an environment where students can reach their fullest sporting and academic potential.

For further information the school's website is <http://westfieldsports.nsw.edu.au>

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