

DELIVERING A NEW DEAL IN EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

INTRODUCTION: Increasing educational achievement has been one of Greets Green Partnership's key priorities since the New Deal for Communities programme was launched in March 2000. We're delighted to report that by March 2007 we had achieved all our education aims and objectives for the area – three years ahead of target. This is great news for local people and shows how New Deal funding really can make a difference.

BACKGROUND: For the first three years of Greets Green Partnership, the Education & Lifelong Learning Theme was handled by the local education authority. In July 2003, Roger Cunningham, a schools adviser at Sandwell LEA, was seconded to the Partnership for two years to lead the theme. This was later extended into an open ended secondment – until the theme achieved its aims and objectives.

October 2007



The brand new Greets Green Children's Centre provides a wide range of services and facilities, all under one roof, for local families with children aged under 5.

Roger was able to hit the ground running as he knew all the head teachers in Greets Green, having been an adviser for all 25 primary schools in West Bromwich. Back in 1999, just prior to the launch of Greets Green Partnership in March 2000, the attainment of the five primary schools in Greets Green was 20% below the Sandwell average and Sandwell was bottom of the UK tables. In 2003 George Salter High School achieved a 15% pass rate at GCSE level which meant the school had to either raise its standards or close.

Four years on, George Salter High School is achieving a 62% pass rate at GCSE and is the second highest achieving school in Sandwell. Newtown Primary is one of the best schools in the borough and all the other primary schools remain around the borough average.

BUDGET: Over last four years, approximately £1.2 million has been spent on the Education & Lifelong Learning Theme each year. This has included major capital projects including the building of two brand new Community Access Points, providing a Community Room in the brand new Guns Village Primary School and making substantial changes to community facilities at Lodge Primary School. A new Children's Centre has also been built at Ryders Green Primary School in conjunction with the Partnership's Health Theme and Sandwell Council. This was officially launched in January 2007.

OBJECTIVES: The Education & Lifelong Learning Theme was split into key areas of focus including:

- Primary Schools (5-11 years):
"Results at seven and 11 will match the borough average by the end of the Partnership."
- Secondary Schools (11-16 years):
"GCSE attainment levels will exceed the national rate increase by 1%."
- Adult Education:
"The proportion of residents with a formal qualification will increase to 55% by 2006."

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Greets Green Primary Schools

Four years of partnership working with the five local primary schools has led to significant improvements being made. At Key Stage 1 (7 year olds) in 2006, 76% of pupils in Greets Green were gaining at least Level 2B+ in reading, compared with 75% in Sandwell. 83% of pupils were gaining this level in maths – the same as in Sandwell.



The rate of improvement in reading over the past four years has been 23% in Greets Green, compared with 4% in Sandwell and 4% nationally. In maths, the rate of improvement in Greets Green has been 27%, compared with 6% in Sandwell and 6% nationally.

Greets Green Partnership started by introducing the Enhanced Learning Fund so that spending was made where it was needed. Individual primary schools were encouraged to bid for small amounts of funding for projects which would make a big difference. For example, successful bids included running parenting courses to help parents support their children with their reading, and providing lunchtime support workers to interact with pupils during their lunchtime break.

In 2004, Greets Green Partnership worked with Sandwell's Youth Music Service to launch the Vocal Skills project. The project supported the Government's 'Excellence & Enjoyment' document which outlined how ordinary schools could use enjoyment to create excellence. In 12 months, more than 300 pupils from all five primary schools in Greets Green had become involved in the project which used creative arts to raise motivation and standards.

Vocal Skills provided weekly vocal tuition in schools by specialist Sandwell Youth Music staff. Each school was encouraged to create their own choir to perform in assemblies. The choirs would then join together to create a massed choir of pupils from all five primary schools. This massed choir performed in concerts at West Bromwich Town Hall.

The project also helped the transition from primary to secondary school as primary pupils joined students from George Salter High School to perform at the Greets Green Community Festivals.



Greets Green Partnership funding supported the building of the new Guns Village Primary School.



While these two projects involved all five primary schools, Greets Green Partnership has also worked closely with each school introducing projects to improve performance on an individual basis.

George Salter High School

In 2003, George Salter High School was a poorly performing school and less than half the pupils who were leaving local primary schools were going on to the only high school in Greets Green. At that time there was a government drive to link poor schools with good ones and George Salter was linked (federated) with Shireland Language College.

Over three years the Department for Education & Skills and the Local Authority funded this federation and Greets Green Partnership put in £1 million in the first year to install all the ICT systems needed to deal with issues such as student tracking, record keeping and lesson planning. With the right systems in place, good quality teachers were attracted to the school.

The Partnership invested further in a variety of initiatives to support the school, including funding Pastoral Managers. The school has totally reorganised itself on a house system so that while the teachers concentrate on teaching, the Pastoral Managers deal with all the non-teaching issues which affect pupils learning, such as attendance, behaviour, parental support.

The school has seen an influx of pupils from around the world, especially Eastern Europe, and funding from Greets Green Partnership has enabled new Polish speaking teachers to be recruited who provide support in and out of school for pupils. It's proved such a success that the school is now rethinking its whole approach to language teaching.

Partnership funding has also been used to run a newsletter project with a local marketing consultancy. Staff and pupils have been trained to produce their own school newsletter which promotes the school's achievements and gives students the opportunity to use their skills as part of their GCSE course work.



With pupils from 33 countries, half from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than a third whose first language is not English, 'One World in One School' is the perfect new motto for George Salter High School.



The money invested by Greets Green Partnership was entirely aimed at raising standards at the school and giving young people a better future. As a result, the whole school has been transformed with better attendance and higher aspirations amongst pupils. Within 12 months of the federation and support from Greets Green Partnership, the School's GCSE results had risen from a 15% pass rate to 24%. By 2006 they had reached 62%, reaching the national performance figure and putting the school second highest in the borough, a position it shares with Shireland.

The proposed next step is to make the school into an academy by September 2007, to make it the 'community school of choice'. A major community learning hub is being created, with the neighbouring Children's Centre and Ryders Green Primary School being federated into the group to offer education from 0-18 years of age.

School Leavers

To help pupils make the move from school to work, Greets Green Partnership provides financial support for 'WorkWise', a project run by Sandwell Education Business Partnership in both the Partnership's primary and secondary schools. At the primary level it focuses very much on citizenship while at secondary level events such as workshops are run to help develop business skills, and vocational trips to workplaces are organised to enable students to expand their knowledge about the types of careers available to them and to give them a flavour of the world of work.

Adult Learning

Greets Green Partnership recognises that lifelong learning has a key role to play in regenerating communities. The lifetime outcome is to increase the proportion of residents with a formal qualification ie NVQ Level II or above, to 55% by 2010. This has been stretched from the original target of 50% and the Partnership is well on course to meet this target.

Early in the life of the Greets Green Partnership a successful Greets Green Passport to Learning (GGPL) initiative was launched to encourage local people to continue learning. When this came to an end in 2005, the Partnership decided to focus on trying to remove the barriers to people learning. The new adult learning programme was funded by the Partnership, Sandwell Education Service and Sandwell College to enable residents to access free tuition at local colleges, plus one-to-one advice and support.

There was no minimum number of people needed to run a course, which meant that just a handful of residents who showed an interest in a subject could learn more. Transport was also offered if residents had to go out of Greets Green to study a certain subject, help with childcare was available,





Greets Green Partnership's team of Community Learning Workers helped set up the network of Community Access Points (CAPs) throughout the area and got lots of activities off the ground for local people.

and grants were offered to learners for any special materials required.

“As well as helping people gain qualifications, we particularly concentrated on supporting people with their basic skills such as literacy and numeracy,” explained Roger Cunningham.

A wide range of other initiatives have also been launched to encourage lifelong learning. In fact, a whole network of Community Access Points (CAPs) has been set up across Greets Green so that people of all ages can learn on their doorstep. CAPs are situated in schools and also in community venues and offer opportunities for learning a variety of skills.

And where schools didn't have any spare space for a CAP, brand new self-contained units were craned in! New units were sited at Lyng and Lodge Primary Schools and local residents were encouraged to decide and manage the activities which are held there.

A feasibility study showed that residents didn't just want buildings in which to learn, they also wanted people there who could help. This led to a team, including some residents, being recruited as Community Learning Workers. They were based at the CAPs to help people join in with courses or set up new ones. These have included IT drop-in sessions, English courses, yoga, sewing and parents' workshops.

The CAPs are home to the Greets Green Learning network, a major Information and Communication Technology programme for residents and students which Greets Green continues to fund in collaboration with the Local Authority.



The aim now is to encourage more and more community groups to use the CAPs and develop them so that they continue to meet the needs of local people. School based CAPs are being encouraged to offer more out of school hours activities for all ages in line with the Government's Extended Schools Agenda.

The Community Learning Workers also organised a week of taster sessions each year for Adult Learners' Week in May. Learners have been able to gain some background, theory, confidence and a level of competency so that they can use their new skill to earn some money or start a college course. Skills learnt range from face painting to plumbing. Plus, they also organised learning events for all ages during Family Learning Week in October to show that learning together is fun.

Other initiatives launched by the Education & Lifelong Learning Theme have included an innovative Library Explorers project which was developed in partnership with Sandwell Library. Children aged 4 – 12 were encouraged to become Library Explorers and take part in fun activities at the library, in the hope that they would introduce their families to using the library and broadening their knowledge and skills.

Around 600 local children are now Library Explorers and more than 180 of them have got their family members to join the library or have brought them along to visit.

THE FUTURE: As the schools strand of the Education theme is now being funded directly from central government through its Extended Schools agenda, Greets Green Partnership has been able to merge the lifelong learning element with the Jobs & Enterprise Theme to create a new Jobs & Skills area.

Jobs & Skills will take a co-ordinated approach to employment issues by focusing on learning for employment. Many residents have already developed new skills by trying out the various taster sessions which Greets Green Partnership has organised. Now the focus will be on helping residents to progress from these sessions on to courses which lead to a formal qualification so that they improve their employment prospects.



New Community Access Points were created at Lyng and Newtown Primary Schools – and the self-contained units were literally dropped in by crane!



SUMMARY: The vision created by Roger Cunningham for Greets Green Partnership's Education & Lifelong Learning Theme when he became Theme Leader in Summer 2003 was to 'encourage aspiration, raise achievements and improve life chances'. Roger has now retired from the Partnership and can honestly look back and say that 'the job has been done'.

Aspirations are higher than ever, achievements have improved at an unprecedented rate and the life chances of local people have never been better.

Giving young people a better education also gives them social mobility. They are more likely to move away from the area which means that Greets Green could be no better off. Therefore, the focus has always been on improving Greets Green's institutions in order to offer a better quality of education not only to those individuals who live in the area now but also to people who may come to live in a regenerated Greets Green.

It is hoped that the standards which have now been set will benefit today's young people for the rest of their lives, as well as those of the future and that local adults have come to realise that there is no age limit to learning.

To find out more about the Education & Lifelong Learning work of Greets Green Partnership, call Katherine Hewitt, Jobs & Skills Theme Leader on freephone 0800 953 0215.



Roger Cunningham retired in March 2007, having achieved all the education aims and objectives for Greets Green three years ahead of target.

Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government's New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded over 340 projects throughout the area, covering community services, crime & community safety, health, housing & urban form and jobs & skills. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

To find out more, call Brian McKinstrie, Greets Green Partnership's Communications & PR Manager on freephone 0800 953 0215.

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