

Moor House School Students say 'Hello'

2011 is the National Year of Communication, a government initiative to raise awareness of and improve services to people with speech, language and communication difficulties. Students at Hurst Green's Moor House School are becoming involved in two campaigns as part of this special year. The 'Hello' campaign, organised by the Communication Trust, shares information and advice about young people with speech, language and communication needs, while the 'Giving Voice' Campaign highlights the value of speech and language therapy to transform lives for the better.



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Having introduced ourselves, the 6 students began by telling me how interesting the release of the massively successful film, *The King's Speech*, has been for them as it deals with issues close to the heart of the School. They each went on to tell me bits about their own stories and how they came to be at Moor House School. It seems that the common factor for all these young people has been the difficulties that they have faced both at their previous, main stream schools and in gaining funding to attend Moor House, which is obviously far more suited to their needs.

Each one of the 6 students that I spent time with, mentioned being bullied at their previous school and that their peers didn't understand the difficulties that they had. Despite this and the fact that many main stream schools are not well equipped to deal with special circumstances such as theirs, it was a struggle for all of them to get to Moor House, with lengthy tests and assessments and often a

tribunal to gain funding. This is one of the reasons why the students recently wrote to the local MP, urgently asking for more government funding for schools like Moor House. They also recently gave a presentation to an audience of 100 people at a fundraising event, telling their stories of difficult times before having their special educational needs recognised and met.

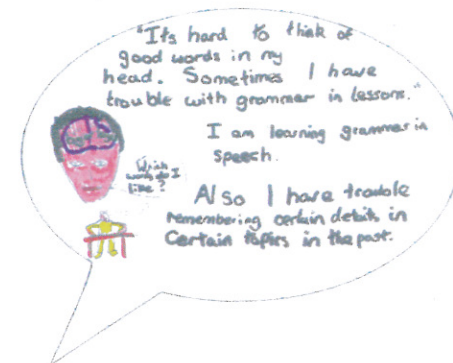
At Moor House, they don't just help with overcoming language and communication difficulties, the children are given help to learn vital Life Skills that many of us take for granted. Most of the students find the co-ordination of movements and functional tasks very challenging, so the Occupational Therapists help them to improve their dexterity for tasks such as typing, handwriting, cutlery skills and tying shoelaces. Students are also taught how to travel independently and how to get through interviews. Every student is given a Life Skills programme which is tailored to their individual needs.

However, for all the important and I suppose, serious, issues that these children are being given help with, there also seems to be a lot of fun going on at the School, which is clearly, just as important.

They told me about many different activities that they get to be involved in during their school week, horse riding, swimming, trips to the cinema and various outings and, not forgetting, the annual summer disco, which obviously ranked very high on the list of things the children enjoy about their school.

Aside from all the things mentioned about Moor House, the thing that the students spoke about more than anything is that they feel safe at their school, for the first time they have friends who understand them and staff who are almost like second parents to them.

Overall the thing that I took away from the time that I spent with the students at Moor House School was how happy they were. Yes, clearly there are things about their lives that are challenging but it seems they are certainly in the right place to overcome those challenges.



What is important is that as part of our local community, we recognise that we have a very special school on our doorstep, with very intelligent students and a dedicated team of staff, who would just like their voices to be heard.

For more information about Moor House School or the 'Giving Voice' and 'Hello' campaigns please visit www.moorhouseschool.co.uk or www.givingvoiceuk.org or www.hello.org.uk