

St Christopher's School, Wrexham
Education through Enterprise

“Nothing should stand still” Maxine Pittaway – Headteacher



Background

St Christopher's School has 241 pupils who are a mixture of PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties), SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties), ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder), MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) and EBD (Emotional Behavioural Difficulties). St Christopher's is the only 'Special' school, as we refer to them in Gloucestershire, in Wrexham; although they do not see themselves or refer to themselves as being a 'Special' school.



St Christopher's also has a unit for parents to access ABA (Applied Behavioural Analysis) programmes and an Independent Living Unit with a bungalow club to assist young people to learn life skills.

Pupil's ages range from 6 -19 years. St Christopher's philosophy is to encourage children to remain in mainstream primary school, although primary aged children are offered places at the school on a needs led basis. The school runs primary, middle and secondary departments including post 16.

In 2000 Wrexham's PMLD school amalgamated with St Christopher's. As a result a new and bigger school site was required. In an entrepreneurial move Maxine Pittaway (Headteacher) sold the old school site to ASDA which enabled her to

consider building a new school or buy an existing secondary school site. Maxine chose an existing secondary school site as she knew historically special schools are built with less outside space, smaller sports fields, smaller sports hall and science laboratories offering far fewer facilities than those in mainstream schools.

As part of Wrexham’s integrated approach to education Maxine is Chair of the Secondary Head’s steering group (equivalent to GASH/GASSH). Through all age ranges in the school there is a free flow of pupils between all Wrexham secondary schools with no stigma attached.

Staffing

Maxine considers the secret to the school's success is staff investment. To quote Maxine “training drives school improvement”. As a result staff turnover is very low.

All staff are dual trained for example teaching and teaching assistants may also be trained in dry stone walling or even chainsaw handling. This enables all staff to be actively involved in the schools enterprise businesses. Even the school’s grounds staff are trained to be learning mentors and can deliver OCN modules.

St Christopher’s support mainstream schools by releasing their staff to help them maintain pupils with special needs in their mainstream setting.

All staff naturally have the ability to advocate the school - there is a tremendous sense of pride.

Enterprise

There is commercial enterprise throughout the school through which pupils gain qualifications and experience. Each pupil has an individual timetable on which enterprise is a fixed option within which the pupils choose which they would like to take part in. Enterprise includes:

- Hairdressers
- Beauty salon
- Car Wash and Valeting Service
- Logging
- Bricket production using recycled paper
- Furniture recycling
- Second hand shop
- Gardening business
- Catering and Conference Facilities
- Café
- Fair-trade shop
- Bicycle re-cycling

CUTS AND CURLS	
WASH & BLOW DRY	FROM 5.00
CUT	6.00
SET	5.00
PERM	15.00
HIGHLIGHTS	15.00
LOWLIGHTS	15.00
DRESS HAIR	5.00
CONDITIONING TREATMENT	3.00
COLOUR MOUS E / MASCARA	2.00
FULL HEAD COLOUR	15.00
CONCESSIONAL RATES — 0 A.P.'S & CHILDREN	
BEAUTY	
WAXING — FACIAL / BODY	FROM 1.50
EYEBROW SHAPE	2.50
IN	2.50
EYELASH TINT	3.00
MANICURE	5.00
PEDICURE	6.00
FACIAL	5.00
MASK	2.00
MAKE — UP	6.00
MASSAGE — FACIAL / BODY	5.00
INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE HR	6.50



The school site is designed to facilitate members of the public accessing many of the enterprise businesses. The safety of pupils is not compromised by members of the public on the school site as the businesses are cleverly located around the perimeter of the school building with no access to the main school.

Most of the schools enterprises run at a profit, and can subsidise the few which do not. Profit from enterprise also allows the school the choice to fund other enrichment activities including the arts.

There is a community engagement programme. As an example the school runs an environmental business where pupils are paid by local residents and businesses to tend their gardens. A further example is a logging business where local tree surgeons drop off wood they normally have to pay to dispose of; the school sorts, chops, bags and sells it at a profit. This service includes the school delivering the logs in their own branded vans.



Many of the enterprises are driven by environmental issues. The school works in partnership with the local police recycling abandoned and damaged bicycles from their lost property.

Every entrepreneurial business enables young people too gain OCN, ASDAN and NVQ qualifications. There is also an enrichment programme with attainment levels for pupils for whom accreditations are not appropriate.

Educational Enterprise

St Christopher's more than caters for its own pupils; in any one week 100 mainstream students and 100 Adult Education students access learning

provision within the school. St Christopher's also facilitates a college programme in which 380 pupils from across Wrexham are collected in one of St Christopher's 17 mini buses (purchased through enterprise) to study at a local college. As part of sharing the St Christopher's site the school works with the Youth Offending Service offering opportunities for young offenders to work within the schools enterprise businesses.

ECO Centre

As an example of the schools entrepreneurial mindset senior school management approached local business Tarmac to acquire free sand for a school pond project. On visiting the school Tarmac raised the stakes by not only offering the sand but also provided staff to build the pond. This was the beginning of a great partnership.

Today the school runs an off-site Eco Centre within a local Tarmac quarry. The centre has 18,000 visitors per annum, is a resource for all schools and the public, has a café and offers therapeutic horticulture across its 40 acre site.

Tarmac needs the school on site as part of the quarry regeneration scheme and in return the school have an off site eco resource through which students can enrich their learning.

"A sustainable model is changing people's philosophy, not the money"
Mark Pittaway – Senior Management Team



For further information about St Christopher's School please visit
www.st-christophers.wrexham.sch.uk