

Case Study

October 2021



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School Lunch Party for Locals



Intergenerational Celebration

School children from St Joseph's Catholic High School in Workington have hosted a special Christmas celebration meal for elderly members of their local community for over 10 years. The event was born out of an awareness by the school of local poverty and neighbourliness and the school wanting to do something positive for the community. The event has proved to benefit both recipients and pupils, successfully unites the generations and builds links with the local community and reinforces the fundamental values of the school.

Background

For over 10 years (prior to Covid-19) St Joseph's Catholic High School in Workington has organised a free annual Christmas celebration meal for approximately 60 local parishioners. Mr Nevitt, Associate Headteacher explains that *"Sadly there is poverty locally and this is a nice thing to do; it fits with our school's ethos and values, and provides children with character education, resilience and exposure to different experiences."* Such an event would now need to be adapted to meet current government Covid-19 guidance.

The Project

The event is organised by children from different year groups and four members of staff (Head of Performing Arts, Head of Food, Head of Faculty and Headteacher). Approximately 70 children are involved on the day. We work with our local parish priest, governors, staff and community to identify a suitable group of elderly people to attend.

October

The staff and children have 2-3 planning meetings. The parish Priest reads out the invitation at mass and promotes the event in the church bulletin. The priest also nominates parishioners. Guests at the meal can reconfirm their attendance for next year's meal, so the previous year's guestlist is also checked. Fundraising then begins - the 700 pupils and their families are asked to donate money and to raise awareness of the event.

November

Guests sign up and school sends them their menu choices which they return by the end of the month.

December

The event takes place on a day during the last week of term and runs 11:00am – 2:30pm. The hall is laid out, guests are given a glass of non-alcoholic punch (designed by the pupils and often colourful!). Christmas lunch is served and entertainment provided.



GCSE students prepare the food; members of the Student Leadership Council meet and greet the guests; Key Stage 3 students (11 – 14 year olds) serve the food; and children of all ages involved in performing arts provide the entertainment including carol singing, bingo, and dressing up as Father Christmas and giving a present to each guest.

Approximate Costs

£200 for gifts, table cloths and decorations. £600-700 for food. The local Asda store donates approximately £500 worth of food. A raffle takes place at the event which helps to cover the costs of gifts for the children involved in preparing and delivering the event e.g. £20 i-vouchers. The meal is free for the guests.

What has been achieved?

A happy day for all, particularly the elderly parishioners who receive a good meal, social interactions and enjoy fun entertainment. The event also fits with Ofsted's aims of PSHE – personal, social, health and economic education, traditional British values and character education.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, instead of the annual Christmas party, the school delivered over 50 Christmas themed afternoon teas to their local community and have carried out community litter picks around their local area. During lockdown the school also provided over 2,000 meals to children and vulnerable people in the community. They provided work packs to families without easy access to the internet and kept in touch with families by phone, making over 10,000 calls. For their support they were given a Special Recognition Award from the High Sheriff of Cumbria.

The Learning

Our advice to any school wanting to do something similar is to do it! Yes, it will be challenging at a busy time of the year and you have to be on top of the logistics - particularly the dishes; but the rewards are considerable. Our community enjoys the interaction with the students and helps to change mindsets.

December is a busy time of year when staff workload is high, and mock exams take place. A better date might be mid-June and after exams when staff have a little more capacity. Considering Covid-19 precautions, the warmer summer weather might also allow for more air flow indoors, or even outdoor dining.

A number of schools across the county have similar events such as large coffee mornings for members of their community.



Pupils at St Joseph's Catholic High School

Want to know more?

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