

Green fingers

Horndean Technology College in Hampshire opened a set of garden plots to its students and local community. We find out their motivation

With issues surrounding the environment, sustainability and healthy eating dominating both the media and national curriculum, one school in Hampshire has taken great pride in opening its own set of garden plots to its students and local community.

After six months of planning, dedication and sheer hard work, Horndean Technology College chose an idyllic summer evening to unveil 10 brand new garden plots within the school grounds to pupils, staff and local residents.

Students at the college were involved in the project from the initial planning stages. 'Pathfinder Students', who study vocational skills in construction in addition to their academic work, carried out the physical groundwork while members of the school's Eco Club ensured every

effort was made to use recycled materials and make the plots environmentally friendly.

"Results of a recent study published by the Royal Horticultural Society found that children in schools that encouraged gardening became more resilient, confident and lived healthier lives," explains deputy headteacher Deidre Hurn. "We are viewing this project as a process that can start with visits from the toddlers in our childcare unit and take our children right through their education to learn about the food industry, catering and nutrition."

The plots were officially opened by Tina Hennessy, operations manager for the Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Education Business Partnership. "We were delighted to support the school by securing the involvement of local business and gaining sponsorship for projects such as 'Grub in a Tub' that will demonstrate the life cycle of the food we eat from seed to plate," Hennessy says. "We already have

FACT BOX

SCHOOL Horndean Technology College

TYPE Mixed community comprehensive, 11-16

LA Hampshire

PUPILS 1,253

trips to food wholesalers and distributors planned for the students and will be talking to the catering department of Southdowns College."

The college received donations of equipment from timber and builders' merchants, Covers, and plants from a local nursery. "We were happy to donate resources to such a worthwhile initiative," says Dale Lambourne, branch manager of Covers in Gosport. "We have worked with the schools for many years and thought these garden plots were a great idea."

Beyond the school grounds, members of the local community have also been encouraged to get involved in the college's plans. Parent Adam Howard applied to become the guardian of one of the eight plots that have been opened to the public after receiving an email from the school.

"I had always been interested in gardening and thought it would be a good thing to do with the family, so when the school asked for interested volunteers, I thought I should go for it," says Howard. "It gave me the opportunity and motivation I needed."

With an ever-increasing waiting list for council allotments, Horndean Technology College also soon realised it was offering much sought-after pieces of land for people to cultivate their own vegetables and plants.

"This is a real asset to the community and very kind of the school to donate so much of it to public use," said Ron Brumhill, chairman of the Hampshire Horticultural Society and Horndean Garden Group. "I got into gardening after I retired from the Navy and I love taking my three grandchildren to shows. I think it is really important that the next generation understands where its food comes from." ■



OPENING | (left to right) Pathfinder Students Tom Sweatman and Andrew Crowe; learning support assistant Karen Hastings; chairman of the Hampshire Horticultural Society, Ron Brumhill; operations manager of the Education Business Partnership, Tina Hennessy; construction teacher Adrian Alderslade and deputy head Deidre Hurn.