

LaST - Building intergenerational connections - face to face and online

Impact of the Programme / The Benefits of Intergenerational Work

The Burnham Intergenerational Programme began with 2 underlying aims:

- i) To provide a group of older people with an opportunity to share their special memories with others, and particularly with children
- ii) To help a local school develop its connection with the wider community

The initial focus of the Programme was primarily educational, the objective being to



extend children's knowledge and understanding of the Second World War through discussions with older people who had lived through it. In recent years the Programme's aims have been extended and refined and its scope broadened to include a wider range of topics and activities.

The Programme continues to have an important educational role, reinforcing and complementing classroom learning and helping to deliver on specific requirements of the **National Curriculum**, particularly with regard to language and literacy (see pages 8-11 of this section).

But what very quickly emerged as the Programme developed were the wider and lasting benefits that arose from building connections between the generations.

From a school's perspective there are clear links with **Ofsted's Guidance on Personal Development** and with the **Relationships and Health Education Curriculum** whilst from an individual's perspective the Programme clearly fits with the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**¹ approach championed by the NHS with its suggested actions to improve mental wellbeing throughout life: **Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give**. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>. We have had many examples over the past 18 years of the Programme's very positive impact on older people's and children's sense of wellbeing.

Each week the Programme's success is clearly demonstrated by the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the children and older people who take part and the happy and relaxed atmosphere. There are shared jokes and much laughter but there are also quieter more reflective times when the children and older people display great sensitivity to one another.

The children and older people learn from one another by sharing their knowledge and experiences but also enjoy learning new things together. The sessions also provide an opportunity for the older people to rediscover old talents like drawing or writing poetry, things which they may not have done for many years. The quieter children gain confidence in reading aloud and interacting with adults.



The positive impact of the Programme is best illustrated by a selection of comments we have received from the children and adults over the years.

AIM – To develop and foster greater understanding and empathy between the generations

(by building relationships between young and old and breaking down misconceptions and stereotypes)

“In Year 6 the whole class had a chance to visit Perry House. Everybody was keen to go and each week we looked forward to the visit. Just before Christmas we made decorations to hang on the tree and decorate the rooms. I met a lovely man called One day he was sad so I made him a star decoration to hang from his window to cheer him up.” (11 year old girl, 2004)

“The Project began in 2002 as part of the history curriculum for Year Five on World War II. But it soon became much more than that. Children from very challenging backgrounds discovered the idea of grandparents and developed a respect for the wisdom of age while senior citizens gained an understanding of local youth and a deep attachment that went beyond the weekly sessions”.
(Headteacher, St Peter’s School 2002 – 2009)

“I enjoy meeting and working with the children. I am learning how the younger generation feel and think.”
(Woman in her 80’s, 2018)



“The visits by the children have been a pleasure to us all here at Perry House. We have all enjoyed their company and spending time with them enormously. Special praise must be given to them for how well behaved they have been throughout the visits, they are a credit to their school.”
(87 year old man, 2009)

“Going to Perry House you realise that the older generation are really nice to talk to.”
(11 year old girl, 2020)



“I enjoyed the intergenerational company.....Before I went my expectation was that it was going to be quite boring and not much fun. But when I went it was very enjoyable” (11 year old boy, 2020)

AIM – To make history come alive for the children and help develop their awareness and understanding of their local area

“I enjoyed talking to the older generation about their childhood – there were interesting differences between theirs and ours.” (11 year old boy, 2020)

“When I was in Year 5 my friends and I went to Perry House to learn about World War Two. I learnt a lot of things about rations, sirens and shrapnel..... A lady gave me a ten shilling note and a threepenny bit which I have framed...” (11 year old girl, 2004)

“The children and older people discuss a broad range of topics, where appropriate linked with an area of the curriculum that the children are working on at that time. Through such conversations, history comes alive for the children and this is hugely beneficial for them. It also works the other way for the residents, who may not have grandchildren of their own and therefore the children keep them up to date with various happening in their lives.” (Head teacher, St Peter’s School 2009 – 2019)



“It’s a good project because we learn at first hand from the older people’s memories, not second hand from books” (11 year old boy, 2020)

“We discovered fantastic facts about Burns Night and found out about the delicious food. I loved learning about Chinese New Year and about all the symbols and their meanings. They were intriguing discoveries.” (11 year old girl, 2020)

“Residents were able to reminisce about their experiences of the war, some happy memories and some sad memories, but it was wonderful to see how fascinated and engrossed the children were listening to the different stories.” (Warden of Perry House 2002 – 2010)

AIM – To provide an opportunity for older people to remember and celebrate special times in their lives whilst creating new memories for old and young

“It has been very heartening for me and others to recall a part of world history which has been an important part of our lives and it has meant much to us to see that the next generation are interested and do care about events in the past” (87 year old man, 2009)



“There are older people at Perry House with much knowledge and experience that we can learn from.... I will never forget these memories” (11 year old boy, 2020)

It was a great opportunity for all of us to listen to the residents’ life memories. It was a magical experience. (11 year old girl, 2020)

“It was memorable and got people talking. I really enjoyed all of the older people’s stories and it was interesting learning about their lives.” (11 year old girl, 2020)



“Many of the Perry House residents had not spoken before of their war time experiences. But in the companionship of conversations with our pupils they remembered and felt able to unlock the past.....What shone out for all who took part in the Project, were the lasting bonds that were formed between these war-time heroes from Perry House and our pupils who would never forget them” (Headteacher, St Peter’s School 2002 – 2009)

**AIM – To build self-esteem and confidence in all participants
(by learning new things, through involvement in shared activities and
by valuing everyone’s contributions)**

*“Our World War II project came to an end, but other topics took its place. Common interests and skills were shared – a shared passion for fishing, teaching youngsters to knit or crochet for example, and both partners were blessed.”
(Headteacher, St Peter’s School 2002 – 2009)*



*“I loved trying to teach the children to knit and play cards and games like five stones. The time never seemed long enough. The afternoon just flew past”
(A woman in her 70’s, 2012)*

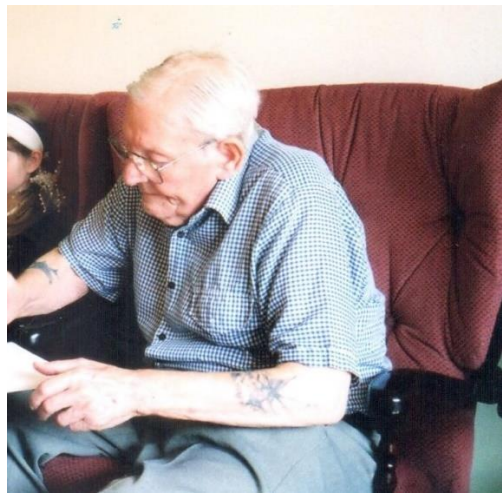
“I love Perry House and I will never forget how we could catch up with the older generation....they would tell us stories about the past, we would have a laugh together, I would even ask them how their day was”. (11 year old girl, 2020)

“Sometimes the older people could teach us about their generation and sometimes we could teach them about our generation so we both learned something” (11 year old boy, 2020)

*“I enjoy meeting and working with the children and I am gaining knowledge of the local area and history of our country.....It makes me feel I am of some use and needed.”
(A woman in her 80’s, 2018)*

“One of the most valuable experiences was discovering what older people did as careers. This allowed me to appreciate listening. I feel I became a more attentive listener because everyone at Perry House was interesting.” (11 year old girl, 2020)

*“One particularly happy afternoon was when we played Pictionary. It was funny because we didn’t have artistic skills and the drawings made people laugh”
(An 11 year old boy, 2020)*



**AIM – To help to build a caring and connected community
(thereby reducing loneliness and social isolation
and improving individuals' well-being)**

"I liked going to Perry House because you got to make friends with people who you don't know and you get to know everybody who is there and you can talk to them if you're sad or upset. I would love to go back to Perry House because you learn stuff and you're being a good friend to someone you don't know and if you see them in the street you can say hello to them. I say thank you to all the people at Perry House for making me happy and joyful on a Thursday afternoon."

(11 year old boy, 2004)

"We often see the children who visited in the village. It's lovely to see the looks on their faces when they recognise us...."

(Married couple in their 60's, 2004)

"We were invited to parties and singsongs. A special memory is of marching around the Perry House lounge wearing old hats, with linked arms and singing wartime songs. For several years our Harvest offerings were taken to Perry House where we would all participate in a Harvest party. Residents came to our school concerts and Nativities and I was particularly moved by their presence at my retirement reception".

(Headteacher, St Peter's School, 2002 – 2009)



"Every Wednesday I felt like I had completed a good deed for the elderly. They have no younger people in their lives to hold and spend time with."

(11 year old girl, 2020)

"The Intergenerational Programme is now firmly embedded in the school's timetable. It brings generations together when families often find themselves quite fragmented and therefore lacking the experiences and opportunities that only more "mature" members of society can help with."

(Headteacher, St Peter's School, 2009 – 2019)

