



Tackling isolation and loneliness within the elderly community.

The pupils at Holland Junior School wanted to come together to create a social action project that would have a direct impact on their community. Inspired by [Age UK and Cadbury's campaign to donate your words](#), the School Council was eager to get involved to help tackle loneliness and isolation within their elderly community.

The School Council at Holland Junior School is made up of 16 pupils, with two pupils representing each class from Year 3 through Year 6. It was their job to gather and represent the ideas of their classmates at their Council meetings and to then feedback the key decisions from their meetings to their peers. Following a facilitated discussion with teacher representatives, the various social action project ideas were put forward. Upon the result of the vote it was agreed that the pupils overwhelmingly wanted to help lonely people living locally. As the school is around the corner from a care home, it was the perfect cause to support!

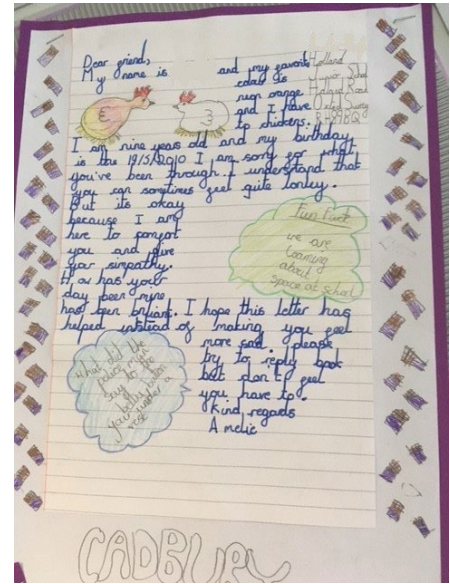
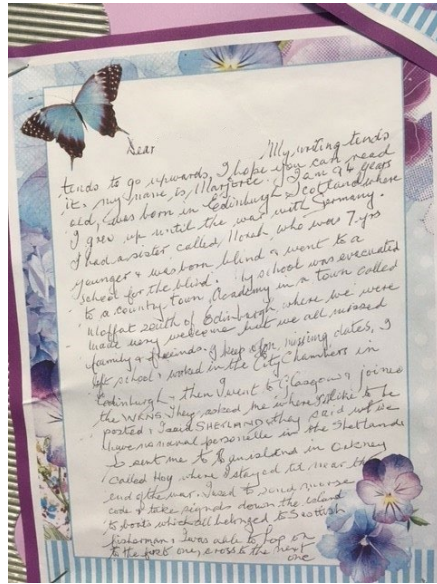
The Project

The pupils were motivated by the Age UK campaign to fight loneliness, hearing that 225,000 elderly people often go a whole week without speaking to anyone made them feel empathetic to their situation and motivated to make things better.

They wrote letters to elderly people in care homes and fundraised for Age UK by getting sponsorship from friends and family for each word they wrote. This meant that a 500-word letter at 1 pence per word generated £5 sponsorship. Although the Student Council decided upon the chosen issue, they wanted the entire school to become involved in writing letters. Most of the pupils wrote a letter addressed 'Dear friend' and chatted about anything they liked or had done. Over the course of a month, the School Council collected over 200 letters and personally delivered them to four care homes close to the school.

There are two elderly care homes in close proximity to the school, one of which provides more specialised care for those with dementia. Twelve members of the Student Council visited the homes. Names had to be pulled out of a hat as there was limited transport and so many children wanted to go!

"In the care home closest to us there are a lot of patients with dementia. It was incredible to see the resilience and capabilities of the young people while they were there. Some of the pupils were nervous to head in, but they did so well in their interactions and grew in confidence." - **Annabel Kolter, Teacher.**



When the pupils arrived at the care home they each read their letters to the residents and were able to spend some time chatting and enjoying some drinks and snacks with them.

They loved hearing from the residents and were amazed at the different life stories the residents had. One lady even spoke about her time in Renne in France during WWII when she was 18 years old. In one of the homes, a really helpful carer started bringing out pens and papers so that the residents would be able to get started on their replies to the children.

As this happened just before Christmas, the pupils thought it would be an excellent opportunity to organise some carolling at the homes. It was decided that pupils from the school choir would sing at the homes. This went down a treat and was thoroughly enjoyed by the residents and the students!

The Result

The pupils at Holland Junior School managed to raise over £100 for Age UK by getting sponsorship for the amount of words on their letters - an incredible achievement that really evidences the effort the whole school community put into this!

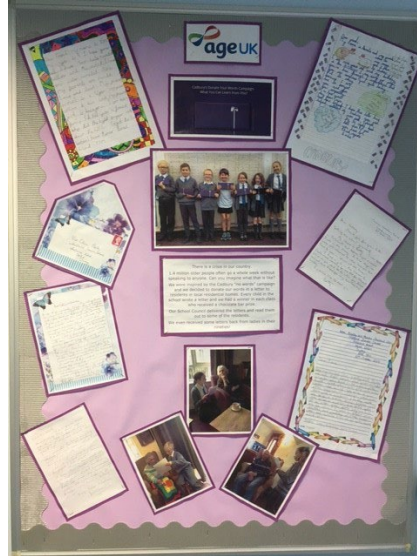
The outcomes of the project were felt on many levels. The confidence the pupils gained simply by interacting with older people and engaging in conversation was clear to see, their nerves disappeared as they realised how easy it is to talk to people older than them.

“I enjoyed talking to the people at the care home. One lady smiled and held my hand when I read my letter to her.” – Pupil at Holland Junior School.

Holland Junior School



“A lot of the children have members of their own family who are elderly or may have dementia, and providing them with this opportunity to engage with the elderly will empower them to become more involved in their own families as well.” – Annabel Kolter, Teacher.



When the pupils started to receive letters back from the residents, it was a very encouraging and fulfilling moment for them to have tangible evidence of the impact they had made. The pupils were very excited and asked to take their letters home as a memory of their project. Many of the pupils that received replies immediately began to write their responses back and have discovered the joy of their newly found pen pals!

The pupils and staff at Holland Junior School hope this is the beginning on an ongoing relationship with the care homes. They are aiming to establish long-lasting links that would allow pupils to visit the homes and interact, play board games and continue this important intergenerational dialogue between the elderly residents and the pupils for years to come!

“We’re really hoping they carry on the letter writing and dialogue with the elderly residents. It’ll benefit both parties and it’s so important to establish those community links. As a school we want to do all we can to help bring the old and the young together.” – Annabel Kolter, Teacher.



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