

Hands on learning that helps drive change

20 March 2014

GASP STUDENTS STRIP-DOWN ENGINE FOR LORD CHANCELLOR

Chris Grayling, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, was shown how to strip down the engine of a go-kart by young people taking part in a hands-on engineering session run by GASP Motor Project last Friday, 16th March.

The Epsom MP was in Surrey to see the work of the county's Youth Support Service, and some of those organisations with which it partners. As part of his tour, the Lord Chancellor visited a series of projects at Brooklands Museum, where the GASP Motor Project mobile vehicle demonstrated its work with students who have alternative provision at North West Surrey Short Stay School as part of a package arranged through their mainstream schools.

Two students, Ben and Connor, who were learning to strip down a go-kart engine attracted the interest of the Lord Chancellor. He talked to them – and to GASP Workshop Manager, Barrie Birchmore – about the range of new skills they had acquired since attending a programme of sessions at the GASP Motor Workshop, which is located at the Sand Pit in Albury, near Guildford.

The students were proud to share with Mr Grayling that they had been awarded AQA accreditation certificates for their work at GASP. They also expressed excitement about track testing the go-karts at Dunsfold Aerodrome, as the climax of their course.

He heard from GASP CEO, Andy Finch, that in 2013 GASP delivered a 12 week programme to other students from this short stay school, working with them at Brooklands to restore one of the Museum's historic vehicles. The project was funded by Toyota GB, based at Epsom.

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Teacher Sally Rafferty, who accompanied the students, explained to the Secretary of State for Justice that attending GASP sessions has a profound impact on these young people. “Generally, their attendance can be erratic,” she told him, “but on the days we visit GASP, they are always in school. GASP improves their concentration, encourages teamwork and, above all, increases their self esteem when they find they can achieve things they never thought possible.”

The Secretary of State for Justice expressed considerable interest in this successful Surrey-based alternative learning provision, and the way in which GASP Motor Project helps improve potentially antisocial behaviour by encouraging disaffected young people to re-engage with education and training, and to gain new confidence in what they can achieve.

Ben Byrne, Head of Surrey Youth Support Service said: “Our collaboration with GASP is an example of partnerships with innovative charities and projects throughout the county that helps the Youth Support Service to enable young people to develop the skills they need to give them the best chance of employment and a successful future.”

ENDS

Editor’s notes

GASP Motor Project <http://www.gaspmotorproject.org> uses motor mechanics and practical engineering as the key motivator to deliver accredited AQA courses to some of the most disaffected and marginalised 14-19 year olds in society, and to students with Special Educational Needs.

Over the last 12 months GASP has delivered over 300 sessions (200 + daytime and 100+ evening). A total of 160 young people have attended the sessions and, to date, 130 have successfully gained AQA Unit Award accreditation.

The GASP programme enables these young people to re-engage with education and learning, and to develop associated ‘soft skills’ associated with changes in behaviour and attitudes, experiencing the value of teamwork, and building concentration and self-confidence.

GASP delivers this personalised learning for a maximum of six students per session from our purpose-built workshop, which opened at Albury in 2012. Students across



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the county can also benefit from the GASP programme, via our mobile unit. We primarily target those in areas of greatest deprivation.

Some of these young people are in mainstream school, but respond best to vocational learning. Others are at short stay units (PRUs) or on court orders. Most are either NEET (not in education, employment or training) or at risk of becoming NEET. Often they are disengaged, disruptive and on the margins of their communities. We aim to support them to progress into education and training, and we prepare them in a practical way for the world of work.

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