

## **St Margaret's Academy School Council volunteering project: evaluation and impact report**

### **Overview**

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019 a group of 10 pupils, the school council at St Margaret's Academy, took part in a volunteering project at the Woodend Project in Watcombe, Torquay. The group turned some tyres that had been dumped at the site into planters, painting them with weather-proof paint, filling them with soil and planting flowers and other plants.



*St Margaret's Academy School Council arrive at the Woodend Project*

The pupils had previously completed a questionnaire asking them which causes were most important to them and what they wanted to achieve through volunteering for both the community/world and for themselves.

The causes they care most about were as follows:

- Environment/climate change
- Animals/wildlife
- Health and wellbeing

They were also asked what they would like to achieve for the community/world through their volunteering. The answers were as follows:

- Cleaner environment
- Raising awareness
- Improved habitats for animals

Finally, they were asked what they would like to achieve for themselves through their volunteering, with the following responses:

- Something good
- Give something back

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- Be a role model
- Set an example
- Lead through change



*The dumped tyres*

Three options were sources based on these responses, and the pupils selected the Woodend Project as their preferred option.

### **What happened on the day?**

After arriving on site at 10am, the young people put their bags and lunches away safely before being talked through what would happen on the day and given safety instructions (including being told to apply sunblock!). After this they were given a tour of the site and allowed to play on the equipment for ten minutes while the tasks were prepared.

The first thing the group were asked to do was design the new flower bed from the dumped tyres. As a group they discussed several options before settling on a 'flower' design, with a circle of tyres on the ground and a final tyre in the middle, resting on the others.



*The group design the new flower bed*

Once the design had been decided on the group split up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 to spray the tyres with weather-proof paint (wearing face masks for their safety). These brightly coloured designs were all different but fitted together well in the final design.



*Spray painting the tyres*

The paint needed time to dry, which could only mean one thing- time for more fun!

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*There was still plenty of time for fun between all the hard work*

Once the paint had dried it was time to put the tyres in place, as per the design agreed on earlier, and then to fill the tyres with compost. In the spirit of the day, this was very much about getting hands dirty. It wasn't everyone's favourite task, but it had to be done and everyone mucked in (literally!).



*Getting hands dirty in the compost*

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*Patting down the compost in the filled tyres, ready for planting*

Once the tyres were filled with compost, and the compost was all patted down, it was time for a well-deserved break and some lunch (after washing hands, of course). The Woodend Project is a beautiful, peaceful space, so an ideal place to relax after a hard morning's work. The group were also joined by the Woodend Project cat, boots, who enjoyed some attention once all the lunches were polished off.



*Time for lunch, and a well-deserved rest*

After lunch, and a rest, it was time for the final task of the day- planting. A selection of young plants in pots were available to fill the new flower bed. Denise from the Woodend Project was able to give advice on how big each plant would grow- some would grow very big, meaning there could only be one per section, while others

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would remain smaller, meaning there could be 3 or 4 per section. The young people took it in turns to dig small holes, put plants in and then pat down.



*Planting in the new flower bed*

Although that wasn't quite the last task. The new plants would need the best start in their new home, especially on a very hot day, so the group took it in turns to water the new bed.



*Watering the new bed*

Now all the hard work was done, it was time for more fun, and there was a big surprise in store (although not the last surprise of the day). Kevin, one of the Woodend Project committee, had kindly given up his lunch break to come to the site to supervise the zip wire! Each of the pupils got to have 2 turns on the zip wire before more time to explore the site before it was time to head home.

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*Fun on the zip wire*

But the surprises weren't over yet. Just before it was time to head off there was the smell of burning (in a nice way), and then the group were invited up to the fire pit area to toast marshmallows- a great way to round off a great day!



*Toasting marshmallow*

### **What was achieved?**

The group had stated that environment/climate change and animals/wildlife were two of their areas of priority. According to the website *sciencing.com* plants are “...*not just important to the human environment, they form the basis for the sustainability and long-term health of environmental systems*”. Plants and flowers also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and produce oxygen, which is essential for all life on earth. And finally, it is well-known that the global population of bees is under-threat due to use of pesticides (the Woodend Project uses no pesticides) and loss of habitats. It is estimated that around 30% of the food we eat is dependent on pollination, and bees are acknowledged as the most prolific pollinators. Each flower

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planted is another source of pollen for our bees and another step closer to protecting them.



*By the fire pit, waiting for marshmallows*

Finally, the group had expressed an interest in health & wellbeing. The Woodend Project is a public-access space in Torquay providing activities and general space for children and adults alike to enjoy the outside world. There aren't many things better for health & wellbeing than that.



*Before and after*

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