

“ The enthusiasm and excitement is moving out into the playground and affecting the rest of the school. The headteacher is pleased about that. ”

Julie Hollingberry, Kingsley Primary teacher

Junior citizens learn to live together

Primary school scheme gives pupils an insight into the real world they will one day face.

“ As a result of using the programme, my pupils' understanding of society's need for particular structures is now very good for their age. ”



Walk of life: pupils enjoy many aspects of MicroSociety, not least the dressing up. – among other careers, they have played at being medical professionals, postal workers and catering staff

There are shed-loads of talent in our primary school classrooms of which we are only now becoming fully aware.

High achievers lead the way, but they often turn to less-gifted children when it comes to the practicalities: what to do and how to do it.

Those observations come from enthusiastic teachers across the borough and relate to MicroSociety, an initiative pioneered two years ago by Croydon Education Business Partnership (CEBP).

MicroSociety is a unique 12-week programme that enables year-five pupils (nine- and 10-year-olds) to create a mini society in a classroom setting. It has already become a regular part of the curriculum in 20 primary schools, with more eager to follow suit.

It helps pupils to

explore the workings of a parliamentary democracy and the way an economy works.

In the process, they become familiar with concepts such as enterprise, profit, taxation and supply and demand. The programme also teaches them the basics of setting up and running a business.

Pupils work in a series of groups, which helps them to improve social skills such as communication, problem-solving, negotiation and decision-making.

They also interact with a succession of visitors from outside school. Lawyers and civil servants attend particular sessions, as do tax advisers to discuss public expenditure and Croydon councillors to talk about local government.

“MicroSociety has been fantastic. My class loved it

and didn't want it to end”, says a delighted Pamela Jacques, year-five teacher at Atwood Primary School in Sanderstead.

“They had no idea how much they were learning because it didn't feel like work.

“Discussions about society's structures have taught them that the contributions of individuals

“They put so much energy and enthusiasm into MicroSociety that we all had a fascinating time,” she adds.

“Discussion sessions have become a pleasure; their listening skills have improved, as has their ability to express themselves.

“As a result of using the programme, my pupils'

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have a significant impact on their lives and the lives of others.”

Ms Jacques says her pupils felt MicroSociety was the best thing they did all year. And that's saying something, she explains, as they also adored learning about the rain forests and becoming passionate conservationists.

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Julie Hollingberry, a fellow year-five teacher from Kingsley Primary School, in central Croydon, is equally pleased with MicroSociety.

She says: “The enthusiasm and excitement

is moving out into the playground and affecting the rest of the school. The headteacher is pleased about that.

“There were some amazing speeches made by children when choosing their leaders and there is respect in the classroom for those they have put in authority.

“The children don't want to stop the sessions. Class ends at 2.35, but they don't want to leave; I have to kick them out at 2.45.

“One particularly lazy so-and-so is on a team that isn't great. Now, he complains that he's the only one on the team doing anything.

“What a turnaround.” CEBP is always keen to hear from Croydon professionals prepared to take part in a MicroSociety session. Please call **020 8395 3311** or e-mail **info@croydon-ebp.co.uk** for more details.