

Portway Summer Scheme Celebrates 10 Years of Success



This summer, Portway Community School hosted its tenth annual summer scheme for children. The summer scheme was pioneered in 1994 by Deputy Headmaster at the time, Sean Dickinson. Since then many different members of staff at the school have headed the summer scheme. This year the scheme ran from Monday 19th July to Saturday 24th July and was for children in the local community aged 8 to 14 years.

Learning Mentor Steve Webb headed the scheme for the third time accompanied by a team of helpers. These were his wife Joy, Darren Hunt, myself, Jayne Bristow, Helen Natress, James Hall, Matthew West, Victoria Pollard, Holly Feller, Emma Price, James Kimber, Ben Turner, Stephanie Monks, Charleigh Dun, Ian Warn, Robert Williams and Amy Dark.

After Steve secured the funding and gave us the go ahead in June, Darren got to work organising the activities and I designed the programme. Darren was then able to visit the local junior schools and deliver flyers in order to publicise the scheme. We did not know how many children to expect. We were all pleasantly surprised on Monday morning to see a queue of eager children and parents that seemed to stretch for miles!

This year was by far the most successful ever as we had an average of over ninety children per day attending. Even torrential rainfall on the Thursday morning didn't affect the numbers! (Needless to say the sun soon came out and we were able to enjoy another day of beautiful weather).

Thanks to generous funding from the Shirehampton Community Action Forum (SCAF), we were able to both buy in top-quality activities and to drop our entrance fee to an all-time low of £2.00 - not bad for five hours of fun! The £2.00 entrance fee was affordable for most parents and meant that we were able to attract a wide cross-section of the community.

The activities this year included old favourites such as football, art and craft and cookery, which were always fully subscribed. We also had a 'games room' with ten computers connected to the internet, table tennis, a selection of games consoles and an x-box connected to a projection screen for the ultimate in multi-player gaming! With all that electrical equipment in one room and the hot summer weather, the activity also doubled up as a sauna – talk about value for money!

Each day we had a game of rounders in the playground which was an excellent opportunity to get everyone involved in a great team game and burn off some energy. Joy also headed a dance/drama activity each day in the school's drama studio.

As if those activities weren't exciting enough, we were able to use the additional funding from SCAF and put extra activities on each day. These were gladiator inflatable (two children battle to see who can knock the other off their podium first), bouncy boxing (as it sounds), sumo inflatable (wrestle your opponent!), Hanger 51 (an inflatable laser-quest type game), a puppet workshop, and a magician.

In addition to the activities at the school we also ran trips to Sedgemoor Splash, Wookey Hole Caves and 'bowling and cinema' at St. Phillips Causeway. Once again, all trips were a success – being fully booked early on.



On the final Saturday there were no activities at the school, instead we took two minibuses of children to Chessington World of Adventures. This was an opportunity for everyone (including the helpers) to let off some steam and enjoy a few rides. There were more than enough rides ranging in pace to satisfy both the junior and the more experienced adventurer!

Overall the reaction from the children attending and their parents was great and many wanted the scheme to run for the whole of the summer! It was nice for the helpers to be involved leading activities, many of which have attended summer scheme themselves in previous years. This is excellent for their CVs and shows that they can demonstrate good leadership skills.

Some quotes from the children:

"Summer Scheme is lots of fun; I made lots of new friends!"

"It was wicked!"

"Summer Scheme was fun; there were lots of things to do."

"It was mental, much better than staying home all day!"

"It was good and worth £2.00 and had better things this year."

"Summer Scheme was really good, especially the laser storm and bouncy boxing. It was great!"

It is not known whether Summer Scheme will happen next year. Whether it will continue or not is subject to funding and support from the school, helpers and the local community. I would certainly like to be involved again!

Alex Wright

[Pic: Matt, Helen, Jayne, Alex and Darren on the Dragon Falls ride at Chessington.]