

THE INEOS FORGOTTEN 40 PROJECT

YEAR FOUR: ISSUE 10



INEOS focuses on the good

INEOS is proud of what it has been able to achieve since it launched its Forgotten 40 initiative.

But it is not just children who have benefited from INEOS' investment. Teachers have too.

And that, at a time when so many good teachers are quitting the profession, is so important to us.

We know it is difficult out there. We know money is tight. We know schools have become the one-stop shop for everything and that teachers are buckling under the pressure.

That's why we, as a team, take such pride in the fact that The INEOS Forgotten 40 Project - and the principles upon which it was founded - continues to act as a ray of hope amid the doom and gloom.

We hoped it would motivate and inspire headteachers - and it has.

In this edition, we focus once again on some of the ways headteachers are trying to improve their children's chances.

We explore how the government is considering introducing family hubs to help those families who may struggle to parent their children.

We have also focused on life in Jaywick, the most deprived part of the UK and home to one of our Forgotten 40 schools.

It's inspirational stuff and you should all be immensely proud.

The Forgotten 40 team



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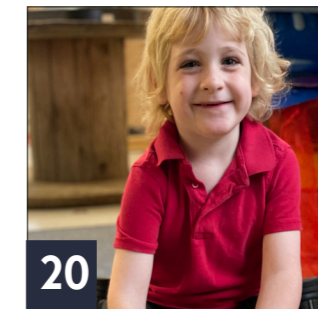
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'It is rewarding to hear that Forgotten 40 is genuinely making a difference. It is fundamentally important that children in the UK grow up with a sound education, a healthy lifestyle and imbued with good British values'

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Shared goals



Headteachers involved in INEOS' ground-breaking Forgotten 40 initiative unite at Old Trafford to seek answers to some of the biggest issues facing their schools

FULL STORY: PAGES 6, 7

SCHOOLS, which serve some of the most deprived communities in the UK, face a whole host of problems.

But with INEOS' help and financial support, they have sought and found solace and solutions.

"We are so blessed to be part of INEOS' Forgotten 40 initiative," said Eileen Anderson, headteacher of Saviour Primary School in Manchester.

The INEOS Forgotten 40 Project is now in its fourth year and continues to help enrich the lives of more than 22,000 children from 99 primary schools.

It also continues to inspire the headteachers from those schools, who have been trusted by INEOS to spend its annual charitable donation wisely.

Many of those headteachers recently met – as they have done every year since the project's launch – to reflect on how INEOS' money has helped to transform their communities.

"It was a chance for them to not only share their own experiences with the project but also the challenges they still face in their communities," said Elaine Wyllie, who is a member of INEOS' Forgotten 40 team.

For schools like Grimes Dyke Primary in Leeds, those challenges can sometimes be overwhelming so the conference is a chance to realise they are not alone.

"It is always brilliant to get together with other heads and share stories in a room where nobody is shocked," said Louise Hill, headteacher at Grimes Dyke.

During the most recent conference at Old Trafford in Manchester, strategies for tackling some of those shared community challenges were faced head-on.

One of the biggest areas of concern was the rise in children needing mental health support, with some children having had 19 social workers. Another was the growing demands placed on teachers by parents.

"Some schools now feel they are at crisis point with parents," said Brian Padgett, another member of INEOS' Forgotten 40 team. "Schools have become a magnet for vulnerable families. It has become normalised that headteachers are community leaders and are holding everything together."

Teachers shared how parents are self-diagnosing their children with autism and ADHD – to excuse their children's poor behaviour. Other teachers are filling in referral forms – some stretching to 35 pages - for parents.

What teachers did want, though, was more support for parents who are working full-time in low-paid jobs.

"We need to give parents the opportunity to go to college by providing free nursery care," said one.



PICTURES: Nick Jones



FORGOTTEN 40 SUPPORTING CHILDREN
 Nurture classes, 'sensory' areas, forest schools, quiet areas.
 Therapy dogs.
 PSE (personal and social education) lessons aimed at increasing resilience.
 1:1 sessions to build relationships between teacher and child.
 Mental health champions in school.
 After-school clubs & residential.
 Breakfasts for all.
 Counselling, including bereavement support.

FORGOTTEN 40 SUPPORTING PARENTS
 Gardening, cookery classes.
 Art workshops.
 Drop-in coffee mornings.
 Clubs for children and their parents. Days out for children and their parents. Teachers say sessions where parents and children are both present are more effective.
 Holiday activities, including food.
 Foodbanks.
 Uniform vouchers.
 Counselling.
 Visibility of senior staff, 'on the gate', to meet and greet.

FORGOTTEN 40 SUPPORTING STAFF
 Staff feel heard, seen and trusted.
 Time off 'in lieu'.
 Flexible planning, preparation and assessment arrangements, including one whole day per fortnight.
 Better training and more support for dealing with families in acute distress.





DECADES of neglect have taken their toll on Jaywick. What was once a thriving seaside town in Essex is now deemed to be the most deprived spot in the UK.

Most of those who live in this tight-knit community, where poverty is rife, are on benefits or in low-paid jobs.

But Simon Wood, who joined Sir Martin Frobisher Academy in 2022, refuses to believe that things cannot change for the better.

“My first impression of this school was that it needed saving,” he said. “And I would not be doing this job if I didn’t believe that it was possible to give these children the chance of a brighter future.”

Shortly after becoming executive headteacher, he remembers meeting children in year 6 just a few weeks before they were due to leave primary school.

“They were clearly very disaffected and did not see much point in being at school, but they wanted me to read their writing and to look at their learning,” he said. “I saw that as an element of hope. They clearly wished to learn, and it was our job to make that happen.”

Since then, attendance at the school in Clacton-on-Sea has increased – and is now broadly in line with national figures of 95% – thanks to the school’s mantra ‘in on time, all the time’.

To boost attendance, Simon’s Attendance Lead had written recorded delivery letters to the parents of every child, whose attendance had reached a critical low point, explaining why school mattered.

When some of the parents didn’t respond, his Attendance Lead was told by The Post Office that those letters had not actually been delivered, but left nearby. Postal staff had also not requested signatures, in some cases, because it was ‘too dangerous’ and ‘not worth it’.

“I was quite shocked by that,” he said.

Despite the difficulties, though, he has never been blind to the problems that existed at Sir Martin Frobisher’s and was aware of them when he was a regional director of education for East Anglia.

He was also aware that it was deemed to be ‘career suicide’ if a teacher or leader took up a post at the school.

Sickness among stressed staff is one of the reasons why the school has now exceeded a £2.5 million deficit.

In the year 2021 to 2022, 957 days alone were lost to staff absence.

In an attempt to stabilise the school, a recruitment drive began to attract a high calibre of staff who were offered increased salaries, travel

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expenses, relocation expenses and cash incentives. But little worked.

“The trust has spent three years supporting the school to unprecedented levels,” said Simon.

The school is also being funded by INEOS through its Forgotten 40 project. Some of that money has been used to encourage every child – all 189 of them – to learn to play musical instruments. Other funds have been invested in improving children’s speech and language.

“The difference that this money has made to the school is phenomenal,” he said. “Our speech and language data shows at least expected progress, if not accelerated, and in some cases, considerably more so.”

It also gives him and his staff hope in an area where hope is often lacking.

Jaywick was built in the 1930s as a holiday resort for Londoners seeking refuge by the sea. It was also home to Butlins and enormously popular due to its boating lake, dance halls, the go-kart track and souvenir shops.

But in 1983 Butlins closed and so began the town’s demise.

The majority of Simon’s pupils live in cramped homes where domestic or drug abuse is rife.

Many of the children’s parents cannot read or write, and, as such, see little point in their own children attending school.

Pupils would, in the past, miss school for a host of reasons. Birthdays. Holidays. Weekends away. Or simply to go to the beach or shopping.

Sometimes, fights in the street or fights in the home meant the importance of attending school was forgotten.

Simon said most of his day was still consumed with safeguarding issues that could be anything from grooming to parents’ poor mental health to gang-related incidents.

The school has been part of the community for almost 60 years, but is generally viewed negatively and so are the children who attend lessons.

Simon said one of his first jobs had been to try to change that perception. “The children thought of themselves as scum because that is how others viewed them,” he said. “That is something we have been working hard to change.”

And things are changing.

“When I first joined, the children quite openly said that they didn’t feel safe and didn’t really trust adults,” he said. “Now they see the school as a calm and safe place.”

He has managed to achieve that by ensuring staff are also protected – often from parents – so they can get on with the job of teaching and inspiring the children.

A significant number of family members have, at times, been banned from the site and from approaching staff, in person, and on social media. Police investigations have taken place and court orders sought to protect everyone on site.

CONTINUED PAGES 13

PICTURES: Robert Wong



FOCUS ON THE FUTURE: Simon Wood, left, and Daryl Power have been working hard to give children, who live in the most deprived part of the UK, a better start in life

Former headteacher takes cue from INEOS as he sets up charity

A FORMER headteacher, inspired by INEOS' approach to tackling seemingly insurmountable problems, has set up his own charity.

Iain Parks is hoping Family Friends of Prescot will be able to directly support deprived and struggling families in their own homes.

"The aim is to encourage families to face their problems head-on, rather than sweep them under the carpet," he said. "If they can be encouraged to do that, they might be able to build the lives they aspire to."

Iain has been drawing inspiration from INEOS – and the way it tackles challenges.

He became aware of the company's approach when he was headteacher at St Mary's and St Paul's Primary School in Prescot, near Liverpool – one of the 99 schools involved in The INEOS Forgotten 40 Project.

"I witnessed first-hand the difference this project makes," he said. "I saw children and young people flourish, gaining cultural, capital and personal welfare opportunities that would otherwise have been out of reach."

"When combined with the tireless efforts of school staff to provide the best possible personal development, the support from

Forgotten 40 became truly life-changing." He is now Director of Education for the Diocese of Blackburn with responsibility for 191 schools across four local authorities – Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, Wigan, and Blackpool.

In addition to his new charity, the diocese is launching its own initiative, Breaking Down the Barrier, with £100,000 to give school leaders the confidence, skills and freedom to develop practical, locally-driven solutions that support children with special educational needs and disabilities.

"We need to simplify processes and remove obstacles for all children," he said. "We need to address teacher training needs, challenge local authorities, Ofsted and The Department for Education, where necessary."

"If we can tackle these areas collectively, we can make a significant and lasting impact on the educational experiences of all our young people."

Iain's work has not gone unnoticed by INEOS' Chairman Sir Jim Ratcliffe.

"It is rewarding to hear that Forgotten 40 is genuinely making a difference," he said.

"It is fundamentally important that children in the UK grow up with a sound education, a healthy lifestyle and imbued with good British values."



PICTURES: Nick Jones

FROM PAGES 10 & 11

"Occasionally, we have had to draw lines in the sand as boundaries have been crossed, and this can be very uncomfortable," he said.

Daryl Power is head of the school. When he joined in 2022, he said the children seemed to be in charge of the classroom.

"Their behaviour was extremely challenging and the staff were very frustrated," he said.

That year the year 6 pupils left with SATs results of 11% reading, writing and maths combined.

"It was unacceptable," he said. "We knew we had to do something." Together, he and Simon started to make changes. And those changes have been – and are proving – effective.

Attendance has improved, and persistent absenteeism has now reduced from 57% to 20%.

In July this year, Ofsted inspected Sir Martin Frobisher's and awarded the school outstanding for its personal development, leadership and management and early years provision.

The quality of education and behaviour and attitudes were all deemed to be good.

In her report, lead inspector Louise Cooper wrote: "Pupils are encouraged to dream big. At school they enter a place where anything is possible and there is no ceiling on what they can accomplish."

It was the seal of approval that both Simon and Daryl had been seeking.

For although problems exist, both are focused on solutions.

"We need to address, robustly, the myths and long-held beliefs about the most deprived community in the UK because we have shown that it is possible, in a very small way, with our children, to begin to redress this," said Simon.

Last year they clamped down after children were caught playing games in the playground from the popular Netflix show Squid Games, a TV show with an 18-age rating which features violent and distressing scenes about a deadly contest where players compete for cash.

But the positive changes have been achieved, in part, by insisting that, rather than working with parents, they have encouraged many of their children to live two lives.

"It is not ideal, but it is working very well," he said.

The parents know it is happening. Some are happy, for instance, that they are insisting the children eat with cutlery and behave respectfully; others aren't.

Looking to the future, Daryl and Simon both have high hopes.

"The deficit needs to be written off because it is a noose around our neck," said Daryl. "Any restructuring would mean losing staff which we cannot afford to do. If the deficit is cleared, we could keep all our staff employed at the school!"

Both would like to see investment in the buildings, some of which are unfit for purpose.

"If the building could be upgraded, we could look at opening up to the wider community and perhaps reopen a nursery on the school site," he said. "That could help to improve relationships with the parents and get the children ready to start school."



MERTON BANK PRIMARY SCHOOL
ST HELENS, MERSEYSIDE

Families discover that nature can nurture soul



PICTURES: Nick Jones

PARENTS have been discovering that some of the best things in life can be free.

And it's thanks to their children's teachers. They have been inviting parents to join their children at Forest School every Friday afternoon so they too can build dens, make wreaths, play together and enjoy the freedom and joy of being close to nature.

"It's been quite a journey for everyone," said Rebecca King, headteacher at Merton Bank Primary in St Helens, Merseyside. "It has not only transformed Friday afternoons for the children, but our entire school community."

The sessions have also inspired parents to replicate the activities at home – be they in the park, the woods, or their own gardens.

"They have discovered that meaningful, enriching activities don't have to be expensive or complicated," said Rebecca. "It's just about time and imagination."

There have been other benefits too. Attendance has also improved.

"Friday used to be our lowest attendance day, but since introducing Forest School, we've seen a remarkable improvement in our attendance



'It has been quite a journey for everyone. It has not only transformed Friday afternoons for the children, but our entire school community' – Rebecca King, headteacher at Merton Bank Primary

figures," said Rebecca. "Children simply don't want to miss their weekly forest adventure."

The school initially invested £13,000 of INEOS' Forgotten 40 funding in setting up the outdoor school for all its children.

"It wasn't just about the numbers on a spreadsheet," said Rebecca. "It was about recognising something fundamental that our children needed."

Teachers had been growing increasingly concerned that their young lives were dominated by devices – mobile phones, video games and iPads – and wanted to show them a different world.

"We wanted to give them a chance to step away from screens and reconnect with nature, with each other, and with skills that will serve them throughout their lives," said Rebecca, who has been headteacher at Merton Bank for two years.

Since then, the children have been learning how to build dens and make wreaths.

But the outdoor sessions have taught them so much more than that.

They have also learned and now understand the importance of teamwork, cooperation, resilience, independence, and problem-solving skills.

"These aren't just nice-to-have qualities," said

Rebecca. "They are essential life skills that will help our children navigate whatever challenges lie ahead."

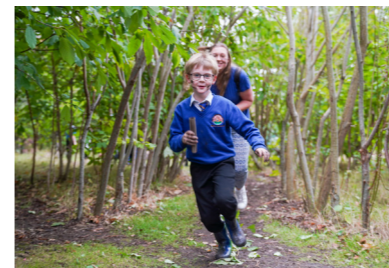
But she said it was the reaction from parents that had truly exceeded the school's expectations, with many now bringing younger siblings to Forest School.

"It has transformed what could have been a simple school activity into genuine family events," said Rebecca.

Sheila Loughlin, a member of INEOS' Forgotten 40 team, recently attended one of the sessions.

"It was a brilliant experience for children and their parents," she said.

"And the sessions have opened parents' eyes to skills they perhaps hadn't fully appreciated before."



BACK TO BASICS: Forest School has opened everyone's eyes to the beauty of nature

How schools are feeling ill effects of COVID's legacy

SCHOOLS are reeling from the damaging effects of COVID-19 restrictions which were imposed to stop the spread of the disease.

Teachers say reception children, who were born and grew up in the aftermath of the pandemic, have increased anxiety, are impatient, struggle to hold a pencil, mix with their peers, and even sit up straight in class because they have been so used to slouching on a sofa.

"Many of them just do not have the core strength to sit up straight," said Louise Hill, headteacher at Grimes Dyke Primary School in Leeds.

Her school, which is one of the 99 involved in The INEOS Forgotten 40 Project, has also seen a noticeable rise in children behaving in a violent manner towards adults.

"During COVID, many parents sought advice about their children's behaviour on the internet," she said. "But more and more of them then started to believe there was something wrong with their children and blamed their bad behaviour on autism or ADHD." But once she started to delve deeper, Louise realised that often poor parenting was to blame.

"One mum just doesn't have the skills to parent her four-year-old and lives in fear of him," she said. "As a school, we can improve his behaviour, but there's very little out there to help her learn how to be a parent."

Attendance in school has also been affected by COVID.

Pre-pandemic attendance at Grimes Dyke topped 95%. Today, it stands at 93% but it has been as low as 91%.

"Attendance has just never recovered from the pandemic," said Louise. "Many parents now see school as an optional extra and no amount of meetings or threat of prosecution works."

She said parents often used the excuse of 'mental health days' to keep their child off school without illness.

"We are battling daily to improve this and lateness," she said. "But parents are not in a routine for work as many don't work or work at home and therefore being up and out for school is not a priority."

But it is not just children who have changed.

Teachers say parents' attitude to school has also suffered since COVID. "Teachers used to be



'Attendance has never recovered from the pandemic'
- headteacher
LOUISE HILL

respected but parents are now covering for their children and disagreeing with social policies because their children can do no wrong," she said.

Katie Barry has been headteacher at St George's Community Primary School in Gainsborough since 2006. "I don't know what has happened to children who were born after 2020," she said. "But there has been a monumental change."

She said children, who are now in reception and year 1, seemed to have significantly more special needs than their previous cohorts.

"In the past, many of these children would have been in special schools but they are all full so they remain on our roll," she said.

She said even those children with fewer complex needs were still not ready for school.

"They are not toilet trained and they have little speech and language," she said. "They don't know their numbers, their colours, or nursery rhymes and they cannot hold a pencil."

Claire Law, headteacher at St Peter's Primary School in Burnley, Lancashire, agreed.

"It is the lowest communication and language baseline we have ever had," she said.

Katie fears an explosion in the use of iPads to babysit children, combined with an ultra-processed diet, has had a huge impact on children's ability to concentrate in class.

"They live in a fast-paced technological world so they expect everything to happen instantly at the push of a button," she said. "As a result they lack the resilience and stamina for many aspects of the curriculum and their concentration is poor."

That is something staff at Grimes Dyke have also witnessed.

"They just seem to lack social skills with other children of their own age," said Louise. "They haven't mixed in peer groups so they don't know how to share, take turns, or wait for adult attention."



School tries to bridge the gap to stop the rot

THE rise in rotten teeth among very young children is worrying teachers. Katie Barry said one child in reception at her school in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, had recently had nine of his teeth removed.

"Losing all those teeth significantly affected his ability to eat and speak," she said.

But the child is not alone.

"Many, many children have black and rotten teeth, often by the time they come to us aged four," said Katie.

The problem is many of their parents also have poor teeth and don't understand the importance of good dental hygiene.

Initially, Katie found a mobile dentist who was willing to visit the school to check every child's teeth but the cost was prohibitive.

"It was £2,900 for a six-hour visit," she said. "I would not have got more than two classes through in six hours, so I was looking at over £10,000."

But Katie, who is headteacher at St George's Community Primary, which is supported by INEOS, did not give up and found a team willing to run regular dental hygiene workshops.

Children are now being taught why it is important to clean their teeth twice a day.

"It does bother me that we are doing things that parents really should do," she said.

"And that is the reason we haven't, yet, started doing daily toothbrushing with the children.

Parents need to take some responsibility for their children's oral health."

A National Dental Epidemiology Programme oral health survey of five-year-old schoolchildren in England recently found that 22.4% had experienced obvious tooth decay. The problem was worse in deprived areas.

Dentists blame a diet high in sugary foods and drinks, combined with poor oral hygiene.

Katie said she was shocked recently to discover that two siblings – one in year 2 and the other in year 4 – had never owned a toothbrush.

It is one of the reasons why she has started buying toothbrushes for children to choose as a reward from her 'box of treats'.





MILL LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL
STOCKTON-ON-TEES

School lays on new experiences and helps to sharpen children’s writing

Enrichment opportunities shape creativity

A TRIP to the beach has helped to broaden pupils’ horizons – and their understanding of life. For many, a pier, a sandcastle and a crab were just words on a page of the book they were reading in class.

But after spending the day at Saltburn-by-the-Sea, they now know what it feels like to walk along a pier, build sandcastles and watch crabs as they scuttle across the sand.

And that, in turn, has led to greater understanding of Mark Haddon’s *The Ocean Star Express* and improvements in their writing.

“They are now writing with confidence, and adding in detail and description because they know exactly how it feels, what it looks like, how it sounds, what it smells like and how it tastes,” said year 2 class teacher Karen Breen.

She had arranged for every reception, year one and year 2 children – all 55 of them - to spend the day at the coast.

Even though it is just a short bus ride away, many of the children, who attend Mill Lane Primary in Stockton-on-Tees, had never seen the sea.

“They just cannot afford to go,” said

**‘Thanks to their experience, they are now writing with so much more confidence’
- class teacher
KAREN BREEN**



Karen.

To compensate, Mill Lane Primary used INEOS Forgotten 40 funding to hire a bus and provide a picnic for each child which they enjoyed on the beach.

“The North Sea is cold, but it didn’t stop the children from diving straight into the water,” said Karen. “They frolicked in the sea, just like the main character from the book they had been reading.”

Later, as they walked along the iconic Victorian Saltburn pier, one child stole a line from another school book, *We’re Sailing to Galapagos* and called out: “Look! It’s where the ‘vast sky meets the sea’ - the horizon.”

Another noticed how ‘the clouds roll in’ when the weather changed.

For the 10 teachers, who had joined them on the day trip, it was humbling to see what a difference those few hours had made to their young lives.

“I really cannot put into words the difference this experience has made to them,” said Karen.

And as they boarded the bus to head back to school, the teachers knew that the children’s memories would linger long after their footprints in the sand had been washed away by the tide.

Family hubs could give children a better start

ASHIFT in government thinking is giving teachers, serving some of the most deprived communities in the UK, hope for the future.

Labour wants to reintroduce Sure Start-style hubs aimed at families seeking help with everything from parental support to housing issues to drug abuse.

For schools, involved in The INEOS Forgotten 40 Project, it comes as a welcome relief.

“At the moment, our school is the one-stop shop for everything,” said Claire Law, headteacher at St Peter’s Primary School in Burnley. “We now help families with teeth cleaning, hygiene, potty training, sleep routines, food and mental health issues.”

INEOS’ Forgotten 40 schools have coped, but many teachers are at breaking point.

“Our schools have become a magnet for vulnerable families,” said one. “They are holding everything together.”

The new family hubs, announced by Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, will be modelled on New Labour’s Sure Start children’s centres and rolled out across every local authority by April 2026.

“Parents and carers need to know they can tap into a community of support,” she said. “The family hubs will be open to all and rooted in disadvantaged communities.”

For Ms Phillipson, it’s personal.

She grew up in the North East of England and was surrounded by hardship.

“I never met my dad,” she said. “It was just me and my mam and we didn’t have much.” But

‘The family hubs will be open to all and rooted in disadvantaged communities’
- Education Secretary
BRIDGET PHILLIPSON

she had a mother and grandparents who prized learning.

“I know I was lucky,” she said. “But life shouldn’t be about luck.”

She is MP for Houghton and Sunderland South, one of three constituencies in the City of Sunderland.

Forgotten 40 currently funds two schools in Sunderland – Willow Wood Community Primary and Marlborough Primary.

“When we had Sure Start centres years ago, they were amazing,” said Claire. “Family hubs would be a fantastic resource and allow us to get on with the job of teaching.”

Brian Padgett, who looks after 20 schools involved in INEOS’ Forgotten 40 project, welcomed the announcement.

“Integrated services can work really well,” he said.

“They could make an enormous difference providing government doesn’t prescribe too much of what they have to do and leaves priority decision-making to each local



community.” Many teachers, who attended INEOS’ recent Forgotten 40 conference at Old Trafford in Manchester, had spoken of the need for change, saying many children were now starting school unable to hold a pencil, sit up straight, and use a toothbrush.

Many of them were also still wearing nappies.

The new family hubs will be there to help all children reach their development goals by the age of five.

According to the government, one in four families with babies and children under five currently struggle to get trusted advice and guidance to support their parenting.

“All parents want the best for their children,” said Ms Phillipson. “But for many, especially those facing poverty, poor housing, mental health challenges, or family stress, it can be very much harder.

“This lack of support contributes to too many children not being ready to start school, with the impact felt in two-and-a-half hours of lost teacher time every day.”

New Labour’s Sure Start children’s centres were one-stop shops where professionals from health, community nurses, social workers and housing were based together under one roof.

Often midwives and advisers from the Citizens Advice Bureau were based there too.

“They were wonderful places,” said Brian. “They could solve every problem and child poverty began to fall.”

But the system began to unravel during a government austerity drive.

Local authorities were given responsibility for the centres but then their funding was halved.

“The local authorities simply could not afford to fund the centres and they withered on the vine,” said Brian. “Child poverty has increased year on year since then.”

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST PRIMARY SCHOOL
STOCKTON-ON-TEES

Fearful children rise up to
meet the challenge

Obstacle course shows pupils how to overcome adversity

A SCHOOL, which wants to teach its pupils to overcome life's obstacles, has been setting the bar especially high for its year 5s this year.

And the children have risen to the challenge. For this wasn't a classroom-based task; this was by the banks of the River Tees and involved navigating swinging bridges, balancing on beams, and walking tightropes.

"What they learned on the ropes went far beyond physical co-ordination," said Kerry Coe, headteacher at St John the Baptist Primary School.

"They learned that they were capable of so much more than they thought. It was an emotional journey."

That didn't mean they weren't nervous when they first arrived at the Tees Barrage International White Water Centre to tackle the air trail – and looked up at the region's renowned high ropes course.

They were.

But when doubt crept in, they encouraged each other. "It was wonderful to hear the triumphant cheers once they reached the top platforms," said Kerry.

The trip, normally out of reach due to cost, was funded by INEOS thanks to its Forgotten 40 project.

"Many of our families cannot afford to pay



for luxuries like this even though they live so close to the activity," said Kerry. "But this initiative helped to remove one of the key obstacles: affordability."

For those who tackled the course, it was an experience they will never forget. One child said it was the best thing he had ever done.

But the day wasn't just about fun and thrills. It was a valuable lesson in resilience, teamwork, and self-belief.

"Through strategic partnerships, such as this with INEOS, we can help bridge the gap between local resources and young people who might otherwise never access them," said Kerry.

"And in doing so, they not only inspire adventure, but empower the next generation to soar beyond limitations – both real and perceived."

For on that day, Year 5 didn't just climb high. They flew.



ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC
WIDNES

Initiative sows seeds of what's possible

THE power of nature has taught children at a school in Widnes, Cheshire, a valuable lesson in life.

They have seen how tiny, seemingly insignificant seeds can become something far greater when showered with love, care, water and sunshine.

"It clearly showed that we reap what we sow," said Karl Landrum, headteacher at St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School.

The children had spent months tending to the tender shoots as they emerged from the soil.

"It was wonderful to watch them at work," he said. "Watching those seeds grow into food they could harvest and eat in school was truly inspiring."

The pupils also learned about teamwork and responsibility as they worked together to create their own fruit and vegetable allotment in school.

"They were so proud of what they grew from seed," he said.

Karl said it had been especially rewarding for those children who live in homes without gardens.

"It was a revelation to them to learn where food comes from," he said.

The school garden was funded by INEOS.

"That funding planted the seeds of learning, health, and hope in our school community," he said.





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