

## **Responding to the needs of the community**

Helping others to develop is just one of the activities that can mould pupils into fully rounded, socially responsible individuals – so say the independent schools in Scotland. Their ethos of encouraging children to become rounded adults is apparent both in and out of the classroom.

For many years, Scotland's independent schools have had a programme of extra-curricular activities that embraces charitable work for the benefit of others at home and overseas. Most schools have a charities committee comprising pupils and staff, which is responsive to the needs of the community. Each year, activities are planned and organised to raise funds for good causes locally, within Scotland and further afield.

Whether using their talents to stage a musical performance in aid of charity, transforming an overgrown hospital garden or travelling to Africa to help build a community school, pupils are rolling up their sleeves and getting involved. And they are doing it with altruistic purpose and satisfaction.

Throughout their 5th and 6th year experience, students commit time each week to volunteering in their school's local community. One such example is provided by students at an Edinburgh school where a group of 12 boys participated in a mentoring scheme with The Place2Be - a charity that works inside schools to improve the emotional wellbeing of children, their families and the whole school community. Every week throughout the school year, the students went to a local Primary School to spend time with individuals and groups of children. One of the students who participated writes, "We all feel very privileged to have participated, to have played a part in helping and to have seen the development of the children. The opportunity to learn with and understand the children has been particularly fulfilling, although playing games was definitely more fun! We have had specialised coaching on how to interact with the children as well as sharing our school facilities with the boys and girls."

At another school, emphasis is placed on pupils developing their skills - intellectually, socially and spiritually - for the benefit of others in society. Pupils can, for example, join the eco committee or participate in community service, for which the S5 and S6 pupils are offered the opportunity one afternoon each week.

Each year, pupils at a third school team up with pupils from a local Secondary School to undertake a number of community projects. This includes running anti-sectarian workshops in local Primary schools to help tackle religious intolerance from an early age.

Another example shows how pupils are given a taste of another life that will enrich their future. This year, S6 pupils (under the auspices of the Tearfund Transform project) visited Burkina Faso in West Africa where they helped to teach English, build a bike shed for local school pupils to shelter bikes from the heat, painted a mural on a nursery wall, and assisted in networking a computer laboratory.

By being altruistic and focusing on helping others, pupils are deepening their understanding of other people and situations in a way that will serve them well throughout their lives - what better lesson for schools to be teaching young people.

**Further information about independent schools in Scotland is available on the website of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) at [www.scis.org.uk](http://www.scis.org.uk)**