

## **Intergenerational Project to address Social Isolation in Chorley East**

Holy Cross pupils are putting pen to paper in a Chorley Council pilot scheme to help bridge the gap between generations and reach out to older people who may be lonely and address social isolation



As part of Chorley Town East Neighbourhood Priorities, Holy Cross have worked with Chorley Council to develop an initiative after they learned of the high numbers people living alone or becoming socially isolated in Chorley East.

They are trying to bridge the gap between the older and younger generations, helping young people to understand that older people have really relevant and interesting life experiences and want to share them.

Holy Cross have embraced the project and the pupils discussed what they could do to take it forward. They researched what social isolation and loneliness is by watching hard hitting information videos online. There were a lot of ideas but pen pals was the first project they decided to do.

They contacted all the care homes and have had a good response, but it is only the start of the project. Year 10 pupils have been writing letters to care homes and set up a pen pal scheme.

Mrs Walmsley, the school Lay Chaplain who oversees the project commented that the pupils are so excited when they receive a letter and the pupils are also learning new skills. The pupils have admitted they have got a real buzz out of writing and receiving letters – and learned a lot.

One pupil, Adam said: “I want to be a pilot and my pen pal is a 94-year-old lady called Gwyneth who, by sheer coincidence, her husband was an RAF pilot during the war flying Lancaster Bombers. “She has told me about her life in a munitions factory and it’s really interesting. We are hoping to meet up with our pen pals in the future. “I have never spoken to anyone so elderly before and you don’t write many letters nowadays so it’s exciting waiting for a letter being sent to school.”

Another pupil, Emma is writing to a lady called Sheila. “She used to run The Village Chippy in Euxton and one of my options is to go into catering, so we have been writing about that.”

Mrs Walmsley comments that pupils are learning how to write letters and the art of communication as it's something which isn't always done nowadays.

Holy Cross are hoping to expand the project into the wider community and have set up 'The People Project' at Holy Cross to identify those that would appreciate a card or letter from one of their pupils. In December, pupils also sent Christmas greetings cards to more vulnerable residents in the lead up to Christmas

Holy Cross have embedded this initiative into the school and will sustain the delivery in the future. Further steps hoped for the initiative include:

- To reach out to more residents that live alone, which are not supported by a care home or similar facility
- Raise awareness of social isolation and loneliness through the school network, encouraging the next cohort of pupils to step forward
- Enable more groups and residents to replicate the project in other communities by sharing their learning and the tools they have developed