

Torry Academy Campaigns and Fundraising Group

During the Make Poverty History Campaign of 2005 I was really impressed with the ability of pupils in Torry Academy to see past the white band and develop an understanding of some of the issues behind the campaign.

As a result, in June 2005 I set up a Campaigns & Fundraising Group within the school open to all pupils who wished to get involved. Prior to this, the fundraising in the school had depended solely on the willingness of staff to organise events – the group has taken this on and coordinates much of the charitable activities in the school. However, with the Campaigns & Fundraising group I wanted to take the opportunity to capitalise on the MPH Campaign and really engage with the pupils' newfound interest in social justice and world trade issues, I hoped to be able to help this group become something very different from the Charities Committees, which operate in schools across the country.

Initially my fear was that there would not be enough resources to fill one lunchtime per week. These were unfounded. Christian Aid, Save the Children, Oxfam, Action AID and many other development agencies produce resources and campaigning material, which, with a little effort, can be deconstructed and turned into a resource that not only helps pupils understand the issues but also gives them the tools to act on them. Over the last 18 months, using this material for guidance we have written several letters to our MP, e-mailed the Chancellor, written to Tony Blair, faxed the CEO of Starbucks among many other campaign actions – and much to the pupils' excitement almost always get a response. Additionally, many development agencies produce regular e-mail updates, which contain advice on current 'hotspots' and campaign focuses.

As part of the 'My Friend Needs a Teacher' campaign on 2006 we invited Anne Begg, our MP in to visit the group. She complimented the pupils' grasp of the wider issues and has since said that in future she would be better prepared for similar visits as she had been pleasantly surprised by the level of questioning she received.

We recorded our activities of 2005 – 2006 in a web diary which can be found on the following link

<http://www.g-nation.co.uk/awards/ourschool.cfm?awardID=117>

As a result of this web diary, members of the group were invited to an award ceremony at the Treasury in October 2006 and Anne Begg gave us a tour of Westminster while we were in London.

I've only really been able to give a flavour of the many different things involved in setting up and keeping this group going but I hope it gives you a taste for the things that can be achieved by such a group operating in a school. Although by its very nature it is an extra-curricular activity, it approaches the idea of the Global Dimension and Citizenship from a hands on, practical perspective. I hope it is giving the pupils who give up their time to come along

important skills they will be able to use outside of school as well as broadening their horizons in a global context.

If you would like any more information or I can be any help at all please don't hesitate to contact me on alan.millar@torry.aberdeen.sch.uk