

PUTNEY POOL IS "a gift for life"

Granard School in Putney has been celebrating a new, modern 12.5 metres, high quality swimming pool which will provide pupils with a gift for life.

The old kitchens beneath the assembly hall were converted by the London Swimming Pool Company and a team of other professionals.

The official opening was made extra special when MP Justine Greening donned her swimming costume together with Head Teacher Glynis Cobb and Chairman of the Board of Governors, John Marston, and jumped into the pool for a two-length race.

Rachel May, from Year 4 said: "I felt really excited because the pool was so nice and not cold!" and Abbie Furlong, of Year 6 added: "I only expected it to be a pool but it had changing rooms with lockers and keys, mirrors and hair dryers." Mrs Cobb, said: "Seeing the pupil's reactions and enjoying that first swim with them was the highlight of the evening - a memory not be forgotten!" There were not many dry eyes at the end of what had been a very moving event and an inspired parent declared that she would now definitely learn how to swim.

The prospect of building a pool at Granard School came about when the school was part of the National pilot for the Extended Services scheme which started in 2001 and plays a role in achieving the aims of The Every Child Matters Agenda in the Government's Children's Plan.

By 2010 all schools are expected to offer extra services to the pupils and their families, staff and people in the community. Last summer it was decided that the kitchen area at lower ground level at Granard School had become too inefficient to work in, the opportunity was taken to realise a vision.

"The project is a tremendous achievement and has exceeded my expectations" says Glynis Cobb, "It's amazing what you can do with a redundant kitchen with a bit of planning. We are so proud to be one of the very few primary state schools in Wandsworth with a new swimming pool. Once we've got our own feet wet, we look forward to opening up the pool facility to the other 12 primary schools that belong to our 'cluster' and to the public in the form of adult swim lessons for example."

Overall, Granard School has performed very well in sports, however, swimming has not been a strong area to date. The findings from a feasibility study showed that although 98% of the parents felt that being able to swim was an important life skill, a very low percentage of the pupils at the school could actually swim more than 5 metres. This may not be so hard to understand when you consider that the lengthy walk between school and leisure centre leaves very little quality time in the water.

"Perhaps it's even a venture which will inspire other schools to reflect on their needs and how they can be accommodated in-house by making better use of and modify existing facilities." In addition, the use of the pool will help Granard school to promote pupil wellbeing and meet the fitness objectives of the Healthy Schools Programme.

John Marston, Chairman of the Board of Governors, is like Mrs Cobb a keen swimmer, and came up with the idea that the Granard pool should measure 12.5 metres in length so that the Curriculum requirement would be exactly equal to two lengths therefore making it a neat goal for the pupils to aim for. "In order to get exactly what we wanted, we



needed to find a pool contractor experienced in designing and constructing bespoke swimming pools and facilities in schools. I visited a number of schools with pools last summer until it was recommended that I contact London Swimming Pool Company who has managed the project in a very professional manner and stayed ahead of the process at every stage."

The look of the completed pool is pretty and fresh with a light blue blend ceramic mosaic tiled interior finish complemented by shiny stainless steel fittings. The ultra-violet water treatment system ensures a superior crystal clear water quality requiring minimal chlorine and other chemicals that can irritate asthma sufferers and users with respiratory difficulties. An art wave reducing technology incorporated in the floats along the competition lane ropes leaves the surface of the water as flat as possible. The pool hall features showers and toilets and accommodation for disabled access and the pool itself is designed with training steps allowing for limited mobility users. **spn**

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