

Woodlands Special School may win £50,000 for sports area



Children with disability get chance to win £50,000 for all-weather sports pitch

Young People at Woodlands Special School in Currie, Edinburgh, are hoping to scoop the most votes in an STV head to head competition on Tuesday November 26th, which could allow them to achieve their dreams of a multi -sports play area.

The SOS (Support Our Sport) Campaign, led by the registered charity 'Friends of Woodlands School', (charity number: SC043958) has been trying to raise funds for an all-weather sports pitch complete with fencing and an access ramp and the project has been shortlisted in this year's The People's Millions – a contest run by ITV and the Big Lottery Fund where public votes decide which charity will win up to £50,000.

The SOS campaign aims to achieve an all-weather play area for up to 80 secondary aged children, who are pupils at the school. Woodlands caters for young people with moderate to complex learning disabilities and conditions such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Down's Syndrome.

Currently, if pupils want to play sports or be active, during their break times, they have to scramble up a virtually inaccessible hill to a patch of land at the back of the school, just off a small tarmacked area. This hill was formed from excavated land left over after the school was built in 2008. The land is very steep, with no access and many learners have mobility difficulties and have never been able to play on this area. The ground on the hill is stony and slippery and

any fall made is very painful for learners. The area is out of bounds for most of the year as it is too dangerous to play on when there is rain, dew, ice, fog or snow. At these times, the children cannot be active outdoors as there is simply not enough space on the tarmacked area for this to happen safely. Many children come from underprivileged backgrounds and often clothes and shoes are ruined whilst playing on the hill, and cannot be replaced. Children have a right to a safe area to play and the safe area in Woodlands is simply too small to allow all to play as they would like.



The Chairperson of the 'Friends of Woodlands School' Mrs Liz Power said:- "At the moment, there is nowhere on the school site where our kids can run around or kick a football about at break or lunchtimes. They desperately need the chance to let off steam and have a space where they can play, interact and be active. We are calling on everyone to vote for 'The Friends of Woodlands School' SOS Campaign on Tuesday 26th November, so that we can build them a sports pitch that will enhance not just their learning but their health. It will also provide a recreational space for families who attend our Family Club at the school."

The Head Teacher of Woodlands School, Mrs Aisling Boyle said:- "An all -weather sports area will bring huge educational and health and well- being benefits to our young people. They will be able to play and participate in team sports, leading to a healthier lifestyle, enhanced active learning experiences and improved social skills but most importantly, all will be included, regardless of their disability."

Learners, staff, parents and carers at the school have already raised £30,000 towards the £80,000 total cost of the project by holding sponsored events, community tombolas, Christmas

fairs and a joint fashion show with Currie Community High School. ASDA Chesser has supported the project and Selex ES Charity Golf Committee donated £5,000 from their fundraising golf day. Selex ES is based at Crewe Toll in Edinburgh and makes electronic systems.

PE and Outdoor Education teacher, Mr Sean Fallon, travelled the entire length of Scotland in a straight line using only human power to raise money for the campaign. He walked 260km, cycled 210 km, swam 600m and kayaked 43km up one grid line of an Ordnance Survey map in three weeks, raising over £1,000 for the project. Parent, Liz Power also raised over £1,000 by running the Edinburgh Marathon this year.

The SOS! Campaign led by the 'Friends of Woodlands School' will be shown on STV news at 6pm on Tuesday November 26th when there will be a chance for the public to vote for the charity to win the funds it needs for the young people. Telephone voting will be open from 9am until midnight on that day.

As well as being available on STV, the phone number to vote for 'The Friends of Woodlands School' SOS Campaign will be published by the Daily Mirror early on the morning of Tuesday November 26th. Votes from a landline will cost only 10p and the public can vote up to 10 times from the same landline phone number.