

Pupils get hands-on training in how to be a coffee-shop barista

Senior pupils in West Lothian have been getting hands-on training in how to be a coffee-shop barista, as part of a scheme to learn wider skills to prepare for the world of work.

Senior students at Whitburn Academy set up their own coffee shop – Brewburn- which offers training to pupils.

An S4 student told councillors on the Education PDSP that working in the coffee shop had boosted her confidence and given her the skills to earn when she leaves school.

Barista training is one of the transferable skills pupils in the senior phase of West Lothian's high schools can take on.

Avril McLean, a quality improvement officer with the council, told the PDSP: "Many of these wider achievements are recognised through accredited awards leading to skills building and attainment."

Thousands of senior pupils have gained new, transferable skills alongside Highers in a variety of skill sets from First Aid training to volunteering in primary schools and care homes, as well as undertaking Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.

Heather Forbes, the Head of Humanities at Whitburn introduced four senior students; sixth years' Sadgla and Grace and fourth years', Alysha and Amy to the councillors They described their experience of working in the community. The older students had worked as maths ambassadors helping primary school children build their confidence in maths before they transitioned to high school.

Alysha and Amy helped set up Brewburn as part of Nat 5 courses in retail and Travel and Tourism. Amy told the meeting she planned to study childcare on leaving school but the barista training had boosted her confidence and could help her find work as she studies.

Mrs Forbes told councillors: "Our main aim is to encourage participation in the wider life of the school and the wider community and allow students to develop skills, qualities and attributes required for life beyond school."

Councillor Pauline Stafford said: "How apparent it is that these courses and these opportunities have brought us four really confident young people I think its fantastic. You are a real credit to your school and I wish you good luck in whatever you do next. "

EIS rep Heather Hughes said: "Congratulations to the girls. Its a massive deal entering the council chamber. I think they spoke brilliantly. The EIS are absolutely advocates for moving away solely academically centred and I really that West Lothian looks at the success at Whitburn and does more, I hope this is the beginning of a picture that develops where we create rounded individuals ready for the workplace."

A report to councillors said: "Given that retail is a significant labour market in West Lothian, a range of qualifications are available in a number of schools that fully support this pathway.

"Some of the wider achievements from the 2023/24 session

include 41 young people achieving the SCQF Level 5 Barista Skills award and 192 young people achieving the Skills for Work Level 5 Travel and Tourism award.”

The report added: “Additionally, the National Progression Award (NPA) in Customer Services at Level 6 is offered in most secondary schools, with 247 young people successfully achieving this qualification in the last session. Many senior phase students have also gained awards for volunteering skills. These awards recognise their contributions both within the school, such as supporting younger learners or serving as subject ambassadors, and in their local communities

“In the 2023/24 session, 2,281 young people earned the Level 6 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work, a vital life skill already benefiting local communities. Additionally, 857 young people received the Level 6 Leadership Award, which equips them with highly transferable skills essential for their future careers.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter