

Media Release

June 14, 2006

Celebrating our Specialness

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Tuesday, June 20 & Wednesday, June 21
Ramside Hall Hotel
Between 10.30am and 12 noon or 1pm and 1.45pm**

Shetland ponies and birds of prey are just two of the attractions at two days of enterprise education events being held for some special school students. Pupils from Barbara Priestman School and Portland School, both in Sunderland, will be working together at a unique event aimed at getting youngsters building up new skills and working with business people for the first time.

Holy Stone Hawks will be bringing a range of animals along to the events on June 20 and June 21 for the pupils to meet. They will also have the chance to put up tents with Reynolds Outdoors Centre, along with lots of other activities over the two days. Around 17 businesses will be taking part in the Celebrating our Specialness events.

Celebrating our Specialness has been developed by education business partnership Education Business Connections. The main sponsor is international pump manufacturer Grundfos, which has its only UK production unit based in Ferryboat Lane, Sunderland.

“Grundfos takes its corporate social responsibility extremely seriously and does a considerable amount for the community in which we are based. Our workers are always keen to raise money for a variety of causes and to support organisations through giving their time, their money and their skills,” said June Torgersen, HR and Production Manager of Grundfos.

She added: “Young people are particularly important to us because they are potentially our future employees or indeed our future customers. We wanted to do something showing Grundfos actively supporting young people but recognised that there is a considerable input to mainstream pupils through a variety of initiatives already. As a result we decided to support Celebrating Our Specialness to ensure that the pupils from the two schools taking part were give the same opportunities and experiences as their able bodied counterparts. For many of these pupils opportunities can be limited but they have so much to give and it is our responsibility to give some to them in return.”

Financial support has also been provided by Stewart Hindmarsh Advertising. And computer equipment has been supplied by the e-Champions Project as part of Sunderland City Council's e-Neighbourhoods programme.

Greeting pupils on their way into the Ramside Hall Hotel will be SAFC's Black Cat mascot. And at lunchtime the students will have a chance to meet Mister Twister's Mouse, who represents the children's entertainment company.

Barbara Priestman School, Sunderland caters for people who have physical difficulties and additional complex needs. Its other pupils are children who are on the autistic spectrum. Headteacher Mrs Noreen Robinson, said: "It's a wonderful opportunity for our pupils. It's certainly something we couldn't have arranged in school on such a grand scale. Holding it at the Ramside Hall adds an element of quality which will make the pupils feel more valued.

"I'm sure what's planned will both stimulate and engage them. I'm looking forward to the children having a wonderful time at the Ramside over the two days, thanks to the generosity of other people."

Portland School, Sunderland, caters for students with severe learning difficulties, some have profound and multiple difficulties including complex medical needs. Headteacher Jennifer Chart said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to be involved with Sunderland's business community and experience enterprise activities at a variety of appropriate levels.

"It is the first time the 'special sector' of education has been offered such an opportunity and we feel privileged and very grateful. We are really looking forward to the two days and would love to say a huge thank you to the sponsors."

The event is being supported by several companies including: Sunderland City Council Sports and Leisure, NERTG, City of Sunderland College, Lloyds TSB, City of Sunderland Council, T Mobile, Barclays Bank, HCTC, Sunderland Housing Group, ETEC, Gala Bingo, 2 – touch, Royal Air Force, ASDA and Wates.

Education Business Connections was formed eight years ago to support closer working between schools and businesses in Sunderland. It's success means that now the team delivers innovative educational programmes to children across Tyne and Wear. Programmes are funded from a variety of sources, including the European Social Fund, but EBC's ongoing development is supported by Futurebuilders (for more details go to www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk).

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