

# CASE STUDY

## COVENTRY BUILDING SOCIETY: ENHANCING LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

This case study outlines the partnership between Coventry Building Society and Henley Green Primary School, in Coventry.

Coventry Building Society (CBS) is the second largest building society in the UK. It has developed a place-based approach to social impact, aiming to make a difference to the people of Coventry. The key issues addressed by the programme are:

- Education and aspiration
- Access to housing
- Isolation and vulnerability.

Since 2010, CBS has partnered with Henley Green Primary School which is within two miles of its head office. The school is in one of the three most deprived areas of Coventry - a 'cold spot'<sup>i</sup>.

**53.4%**

of HGPS pupils are eligible for free school meals at any time in the last 6 years, compared to the national average of 23%.<sup>ii</sup>

**43.9%**

of pupils' first language is not English, compared to the national average of 19.3%.<sup>iii</sup>

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The relationship with Henley Green Primary School began with a small number of reading



volunteers. The school is also a feeder primary for Lyng Hall Secondary School, another partner of CBS, where the building society delivers activity to support young people into employment or continued education.

CBS has developed a range of numeracy interventions in partnership with Coventry primary schools. The long-term nature of the relationship has enabled the aims of the programmes to be aligned to the needs and aspirations of each school and grow organically into a suite of interventions targeted at each age group to develop numeracy skills and demonstrate their real-world application.

Many of the children CBS encounter will go on to become their customers or employees and the aim is to give young people an enjoyable and positive experience which they will remember into secondary school where they will likely encounter CBS again.



## What programmes are delivered?

In primary schools, CBS deliver the following programmes:

- Number Partners,
- Fun with Numbers,
- Basic Money Management and
- Real-life Maths.

The programmes can be delivered in sequence, to children aged between 7-11, culminating in Year 5 and 6 pupils seeing the real-world application of maths at Coventry Building Society.

### Number Partners

CBS began its numeracy support by providing volunteers to work with up to 4 children on a weekly basis at lunchtimes. This support is open to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 who do not meet the expected numeracy level at school. Volunteers use a combination of material provided by the schools and maths games provided by CBS. After the first year, CBS and the school reviewed progress and identified that asking pupils to attend during their lunch break limited attendance. The school and CBS decided to create Fun with Numbers to drive interest.

### Fun with Numbers (FWN)

FWN enables pupils identified by the school as needing additional support to bring a friend to a 'maths party'. This idea later grew to stand-alone sessions open to all pupils. Pupils move around the room, spending 10 minutes with each volunteer playing different maths games.

### Basic Money Management

Pupils start to consider numeracy as a life skill and work with CBS volunteers to consider budgeting, saving and discover how interest works.

### Real-life Maths

For Year 5 and 6 pupils, CBS uses its own 'training branch' based at its head office to

experience different job roles at CBS including working as a cashier. The pupils use pretend money, pass books and machines; roleplaying deposit and withdrawal scenarios with each other.

Branch staff support the session and demonstrate examples of good customer service. They also provide a tour of the high street branch and banking hall. Pupils consider branch management and learn about numeracy tools to predict customer flow, potential queuing scenarios, and learn how this helps manage staffing levels.

In all sessions at school or on site, CBS staff wear what they'd usually wear, with some in uniform. Staff talk about their jobs and answer questions from the pupils. The school value this insight into the world of work to help drive aspiration and interest in future careers which require a range of numeracy and other skills, including customer service.

**'WORKING WITH CBS VOLUNTEERS AND VISITING THE SITE TO DO REAL-LIFE MATHS HELPS TO SHOW HOW IMPORTANT MATHS IS, ESPECIALLY IF PARENTS OF PUPILS STRUGGLE WITH MATHS AND BUDGETING, THE CHILD CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF MATHS WHICH WORKING WITH CBS VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP TO CHANGE'**

**Claire Nicholson, Henley Green Primary School**

## Dealing with the impact of COVID-19

During the pandemic, CBS has paused delivery in schools until the risk assessment at local schools changes and volunteers can visit schools in person.

Following discussions with Henley Green Primary School where teachers expressed concern about a lack of access to resources to support home learning, CBS focused on enabling pupils to 'catch-up' on lost learning. As a result of this early support, Henley Green Primary School was able to

## HOW CAN BUSINESSES ENHANCE CURRICULUM LEARNING?

provide every child with a special workbook to use at home during lockdown focused on Maths and English, together with a stationary pack.

CBS went on to create the Coventry Counts Numeracy Fund, a £50k funding source for Coventry schools to apply for grants of up to £5k for numeracy interventions. Through the fund, Henley Green Primary School was able to provide further support for their pupils including resource packs and videos which enabled teachers to handover tools and guidance to teaching assistants to provide more catch-up time.

In Coventry based secondary schools, CBS delivers its Business in the Community award-winning Employability Skills programme to Year 12 students<sup>iv</sup>. Over the course of 4-6 months, students undertake a series of activity with CBS volunteers, designed to raise their aspirations and work readiness. Since 2016 over 500 volunteers and 750 students have been involved in the programme – making up a total of 3000 volunteer hours. 100% of all involved have said they would recommend them and 95% of students confirmed they felt their chances of gaining employment had increased as a direct result of taking part. During the pandemic, CBS has been able to move the provision online and continue delivery in an adapted format.

### Factors for success

#### Getting started

When CBS first began working with schools to deliver numeracy activities, it engaged with specialist third parties such as [Young Enterprise and Young Money](#), and the [Number Partners](#) website. As the relationships and understanding of what local schools wanted developed, CBS moved to creating content specific to its business and meeting the specific requirements of local schools.

#### Experience of key staff members

CBS's Corporate Responsibility Team includes employees from varied working backgrounds and those who have worked in a variety of different roles at CBS for a number of years. This experience, in combination with a close working relationship and support of the CBS Learning and Development team, has contributed to the development of relationships and resources which embed the CBS business into their programmes whilst also meeting the curriculum and skills needs of partner schools. Before the team grew, CBS worked with education brokers to advise and support them.

#### Long-term relationship with schools

Many of CBS's programmes in primary schools have been developed in collaboration with teachers and adapted to ongoing feedback through review meetings with the schools and surveys. Henley Green Primary School was able to indicate which resources are most useful for CBS to deliver, make amends or request additional input. By ensuring the schools needs are met, teachers can illustrate the direct curriculum benefits of engaging and allocate curriculum time for the activities, helping to drive engagement.

#### Training volunteers

Training is provided to all volunteers before they go into schools. Originally, this was delivered by brokers or the partner schools and covered working with children, safeguarding, talking about jobs and careers, and answering difficult questions. As CBS has grown its offer to schools, training provided includes links to staff development and engagement. Feedback is gathered from schools and other partners about how CBS volunteers have got on and this is fed back into personal development plans involving the volunteers' line managers.

#### Balancing the needs of customers and the commitment to schools

CBS asks all volunteers to ensure they see through the commitment made to a school. To

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mitigate any unexpected requirements to meet the needs of customers, CBS works to group volunteers for each commitment so that if a volunteer needs to respond to a customer, this doesn't impact upon the school or the children.

### Outcomes and impacts

CBS conducts review meetings with teaching staff and focus groups (where appropriate). It also conducts questionnaires with pupils to capture 'pupil voice', helping to drive clearer understanding of outcomes and impacts.

**'OUR MEASURE OF IMPACT IS THE ENGAGEMENT AND ENJOYMENT OF MATHS WE SEE GROW IN OUR PUPILS'** Henley Green Primary School teacher

Student feedback indicates high levels of enjoyment of these sessions. Teachers report pupils are more engaged and able to talk about the session and what they have learnt.

**'HAVING THE SAME VOLUNTEERS YEAR AFTER YEAR AS THE CHILDREN MOVE THROUGH THE SCHOOL MEANS THAT CBS VOLUNTEERS KNOW WHAT THE PUPILS HAVE DONE BEFORE, THEY HAVE BUILT A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM AND THEY CAN HELP THEM TAKE THE NEXT STEP'**

Henley Green Primary School teacher

The next phase of Coventry Counts will be the launch of online numeracy activities. These will be linked to the curriculum and free for teachers to

download. With around 19,000 Key Stage 2 pupils in the city, CBS hopes their reach will be increased through this channel.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> Careers & Enterprise Company (2016), Understanding the careers cold spots: The Careers & Enterprise Company prioritisation indicators 2016 [online], accessed here:

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/cold-spots-reports>

<sup>ii</sup> GOV.UK, School Performance Tables [online], accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>

<sup>iii</sup> Department for Education (2021), Schools, pupils, and their characteristics [online], accessed here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

<sup>iv</sup> EmployabilityUK (2018), Employability UK and Coventry Building Society win the 2018 Responsible Business Education Partnership Award [online], accessed here:

<https://www.employabilityuk.org/employabilityuk-and-coventry-building-society-win-the-2018-responsible-business-education-partnership-award/>