



Volunteering Watling View School

For the third year running, eleven colleagues from across the Society visited Watling View School in St Albans for a day this summer to help give their facilities a spruce up ahead of the new term in September.

Watling View is a special school catering for over 100 pupils aged 2-19 with a wide range of complex and profound learning difficulties. Their focus is helping students develop individual social lives, independence and communication skills, ensuring they're prepared for tackling in the wider world. Even during our short visits while the hallways are empty, we can see what a wide range of support is provided by their staff to their pupils, with specialist resources including a hydrotherapy pool, sensory and dark rooms, soft play facilities and a studio flat where older pupils can practice key life skills.

In time-honoured fashion, most of us set about giving a few classrooms and corridors a fresh lick of paint (trying hard to get more paint on the walls than ourselves!). Elsewhere a team gave the Watling School café a refresh both inside and out; the café is one of many examples of how Watling View provides a safe environment for its pupils to develop practical skills which they can bring forward into adulthood.

As always, Mark and the rest of the Watling View Facilities team were excellent hosts, providing our painting tools making sure we didn't get too lost around the school! Watling View's guiding vision is to support their pupils to "Be kind, Be responsible, Be the Best You Can", and we were delighted to lend a small hand in helping them to achieve this goal.

When work was finished, the team decamped to the local pub for a much-deserved refreshment. We look forward to continuing our tradition and visiting Watling View once again next year!



Volunteering Sunnyside Rural Trust

On June 3rd, four of our colleagues volunteered at Sunnyside Rural Trust in Hemel Hempstead.

Our team were given the task of clearing and tidying polytunnel 5 alongside trainees on-site for the day. Jobs included sorting out plant pots into sizes and discarding any broken pots not fit for use. We also sorted plastic plant trays into piles and helped the general organising of the polytunnel. Luckily, the British weather played its part which meant it wasn't too hot working in the tunnel.

This was our fourth year in a row where we have spent a day volunteering at Sunnyside. The team had a great time, and as usual a very rewarding day was had helping out such a fantastic project. If any of our members get a chance, we definitely recommend a visit.

About Sunnyside Rural Trust

Sunnyside Rural Trust was founded in 1990 as a small, horticultural project for young people and adults with learning disabilities. It is now a thriving charity and social enterprise, offering training and work experience for over 170 vulnerable people in the local community.

Sunnyside train people with learning disabilities to acquire skills in a number of rural and retail activities. These include beekeeping, looking after chickens, growing a wide range of plants and produce, landscaping, garden maintenance and working in on-site cafés and farm shops.

Their training and work experience takes place across Dacorum in Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Northchurch in a range of tranquil settings. In total, Sunnyside employs 36 staff and has 37 volunteers.

Hemel Food Garden

Hemel Food Garden (HFG) is one of four Sunnyside sites. Here the team grow produce such as fruit, vegetables and salads. They also engage in poultry and beekeeping, PAT testing, gardening design and maintenance, allotment makeovers, and growing and selling a wide range of plants.

On site, HFG have a farm shop (open Monday to Saturday 10am until 3pm) where Sunnyside produce is sold (fresh eggs, honey, jam and vegetables). It champions local food and promotes local organic and fair-trade food. They also have a range of zero waste and plastic free products.

Adjacent to the farm shop is the Sunnyside Up café. The café has a relaxing atmosphere and is situated in a sunny spot, making the seating area in the garden a popular destination for passers-by along the canal. The café provides trainees the opportunity to learn all the skills required to run a café, such as customer service, handling money, barista, cooking and stock control.

