

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Kelly Gray explains why it's important to her that this Notting Hill prep is firmly rooted in its local community

When I joined Bassett House School as Head last year, I wanted to ensure this wonderful prep was firmly rooted in its community.

Bassett House School is in historic north Kensington, amid red-brick Edwardian homes and local shops, attracting many families with its villagey feel. Housed in three beautiful buildings, within a few feet of each other on our little campus, complete with a local coffee shop, corner shop, vets and friendly baker nearby. It's a school that is in, and of, its community.

Every day, our students walk in crocodiles between the buildings for lessons, to play sport in Kensington Memorial Park, or go for a riding lesson on nearby Wormwood Scrubs. Every day, a class heads off to our community garden where we're developing a sustainability curriculum with the charity, Growing Space. And each day, we all dine together at St Helen's church hall, often bumping into Reverend Steve, our local vicar.

From singing and dancing at our local retirement home and carolling on Portobello Road to litter picking in the local area and campaigning with local MPs, embedding Bassett House School (BHS) in the community, and priming children who aren't engines of privilege, but enjoy contributing positively to the area in which they live, is very important to us all at here.

And I believe parents should be involved, too. I hold no truck with keeping them at a distance; I firmly believe that millennial parents want to be engaged in their child's life experiences, so-called 'maximum parenting', so while we ensure that communications are slick, streamlined and digitally accessibly to make busy lives as seamless as possible, parents also want to have strong insight into their children's learning which we're more than happy to share with them.

When parents choose Bassett House, they're trusting we can meld the in loco parentis and inspirational teacher roles, mastering the alchemy of learning so that children can go on to open every door they see. We take this incredibly seriously but in the spirit of family, we're not afraid to poke fun at ourselves, whether that be at our annual staff pantomime – easily our best-attended event – or our staff vs. parent quiz. I address parents by their first names, and they me.

I'm part of the WhatsApp group for the Bassett class my own twins are lucky enough to be part of.

Families don't keep one another at arm's length or hide behind formalities; they have honest, constructive conversations and work together. When I joined BHS, I was very clear that creating a nurturing community needed to be more than just a strapline. I'm in every single classroom, every single day – children run up and hug me – and I love that! Hot chocolate is the highlight of the week for me, and it isn't reward driven; the children are chosen at random, therefore ensuring every single one gets a chance in the spotlight to talk about what makes them tick.

This term we're celebrating our community partnership with Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre. BHS pupils enjoy riding lessons at the Pony Centre – aside from the obvious physical and therapeutic



Kelly Gray is Head of Bassett House School in West London

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benefits of riding, they're learning responsibility by helping at the stables, as well as the biology of horses, as part of a living curriculum that takes learning out of the classroom. In return, the riding lessons and fundraising we've undertaken for WSPC are ensuring the long-term viability of these treasured stables: a longstanding charity that gives children with SEN and learning difficulties amazing opportunities. This for me, is community in action.

And of course, when we celebrated our launch, the special equine-themed cupcakes came from Adriana, who runs the local café. She regularly invites our pupils for baking and decorating sessions in the sunshine.

What more could a headteacher wish for? We've just held our 75th birthday party – where one of our parents, a professional dancer, taught us the lindy hop. I feel very proud that BHS has been a fixture of this neighbourhood for decades. I look forward to building new connections for the next 75 years for this wonderful community school. 🍷