



Turnford School

IN 2002 THE SCHOOL WAS IN DEFICIT AND THERE NEED TO BE A PLAN TO TURN THINGS AROUND. ONE OF THE AREAS WHERE ACTION WAS TAKEN WAS CATERING. MIKE SAWYER TALKED TO PHILL BODSWORTH, SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER

'The school is currently in a state of transition with a new headteacher about to take up post. There is now a commitment to improvement at all levels and a capacity to reach the challenging but achievable targets set in recent years': said the Ofsted report published in 2002.

The 2004/5 academic year at Turnford School, Cheshunt, Herts, got off to a cracking start with a record 46% A-C result in the GCSE exams – up 6%.

In September 2004 the school achieved Sports College Status which helps sharpen the sports focus with nearly £500,000 from government to hire a specialist dance teacher and create a dance studio to help get the girls in particular more involved in sport.

Some £410,000 of lottery funding has also been achieved to build a floodlit astra-turf pitch, completing early 2005.

The local authority has approved £5million for expansion, which will see numbers rise at this mixed comprehensive for students aged 11 to 18 to 1150 over the next four years.

"From having been years in the doldrums, things have really turned around," says School Business Manager Phill Bodsworth.

There is massive community use for the site, for weddings, functions and sports events – contributing £75,000 towards the running costs.

The school opens at 7am for activities such as the badminton club – and stays open until 10pm for evening classes. At weekends, it is open throughout the day for activities.

Bodsworth started with Turnford as School Manager 10 years ago. "When I arrived, there was myself, two secretaries and a part timer. Now there is eight office staff plus me and in total over 40 support staff including cleaners and caretakers. More and more schools are moving this way; it's about letting the teachers teach."

In 2002 the school was in deficit from a combination of factors, but the national teacher shortage and consequent agency fees

incurred substantial unbudgeted costs.

A recovery plan looked at all aspects of the school and it was decided to consider more big changes. "We then decided to look at the catering but this was a case of needing an expert to hold our hands. We talked to the staff, contractors and compared the local authority offer with an in-house option. We met FCSI consultant Richard Wedgbury of Alexander Jon Richardson & Associates – he had been involved in a lot of schools looking to do the same as us and we learnt from them.

Business plan

"In the first year Richard was very closely involved and helped us with the business plan and projections and at the end of the year, we were bang on and slightly exceeded expectations.

"He pays for himself. If you count the vending operation, the first year contributions would be pushing £40,000 before infrastructure cost. We used to break even. It is now £25,000 over and above what it would have been within the old school meals structure.

"We have used the Pelican Buying Consortium and their prices and unit costs are less than that from the old school meals service.

"Richard's contribution has been invaluable – he has the expertise the school does not and that gives us that 'extra factor'.

"The meals service has improved. We received a healthy eating award prior to Richard and have maintained that.

"For the coming year, we are taking Coca Cola out of the school but at no cost to us. Britvic has replaced the offer with its selection of sparkling waters and juices and guaranteed to match the contribution that Coke would have delivered."

Turnford School www.turnford.herts.sch.uk

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