

back to school for bugler developments

Stewed cabbage, Spotted Dick and lumpy custard have all recently appeared on the Risk Registers of Rickmansworth-based affordable housing contractor, Bugler Developments

Under an initiative lead by operations director, Mark King, Bugler have embarked on a programme of close engagement with schools in the areas neighbouring their sites. On more than one occasion this has involved partaking of the offerings of the dreaded school canteen.

"It's nowhere near as bad as I remember it," remarks King diplomatically, when queried about his recent dining experiences.

Despite the catering, in recent months Bugler teams have been into schools in the London boroughs of Haringey, Hackney, Newham and Brent, along with two neighbourhood schools in Oxford, where they are working with A2Dominion.

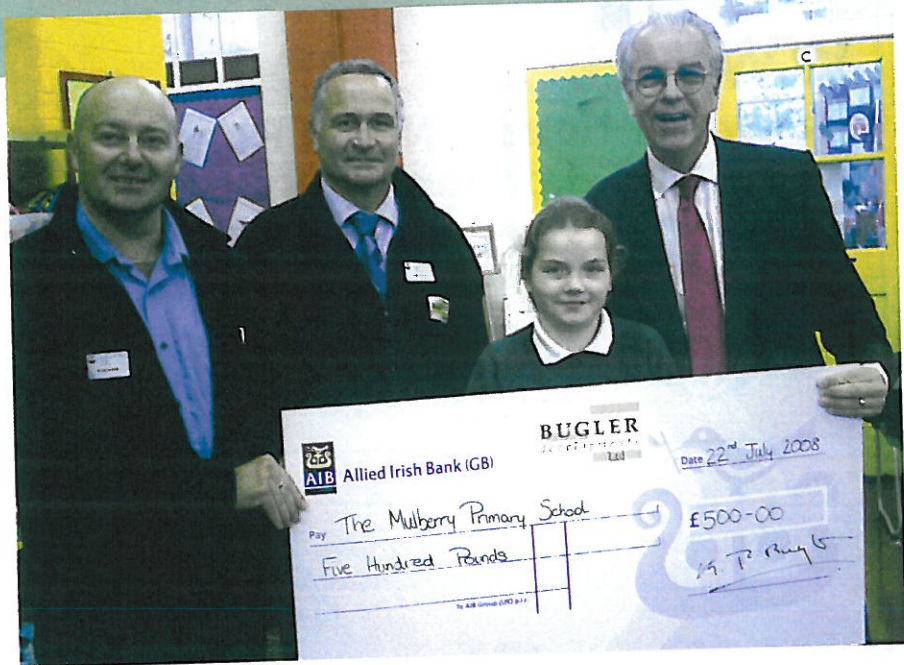
Managing director, Andy Bugler comments: "The vast majority of our projects are built within heavily populated urban areas and invariably are close to and often adjoining a local school. This has provided us with excellent opportunities to give something back to the community whilst creating good neighbourly relations. All our initiatives have been well received and hopefully we might enthuse some young minds to pursue a career in construction in the future."

The Bugler teams have been using a combination of slideshows, interactive games and reading material designed to capture the imaginations of children as well as educating them. The key issue is to explain the dangers of building sites to the youngsters in a way they can relate to.

This was best illustrated recently when Mark King, Shane Mackintosh, contracts manager, and Dave Culliton, pre-construction manager, spent the day at Ferry Lane Primary School in Tottenham Hale, Haringey.

The school is adjacent to a current Bugler project for Shian Housing Association which will see the re-development of an existing pub and retail site to provide 30 affordable flats and a new community shop.

An early morning meeting was held with the headteacher, Maxine Pattison and deputy David Mackie to discuss the logistics, timescales and safety aspects of the project. Bugler believes that this is a very important step in informing the schools of how



the construction works can affect their operation at the earliest possible stage, giving the school management the best opportunity of disseminating and reinforcing the site safety message to pupils and informing parents of the project.

After meeting the teachers, the team gave their first presentation of the day to parents at an informal coffee morning. "This proved to be a very good two way exchange of information, allowing the parents to understand what is to be built and how this may affect their parking and drop off arrangements," says Mark King, operations director. "Buglers got to hear the concerns of their neighbours and also gained some valuable local knowledge."

With the help of parents and the school, an alternative routine for dropping off and picking up the children was developed, which has maintained safe access for the children whilst allowing flexibility with site deliveries and logistics.

Following the parents' meeting the Bugler team gave class-by-class presentations to Year 5 and 6 pupils, presenting each of them with the HSE published "Stay Safe" activity book. "These were a great success with some really well thought out

questions from the children," says King. "One nine year-old immediately picked up on the lack of car parking spaces on the scheme, leaving Dave Culliton to try and explain the intricacies of planning policy, transport strategy and car free schemes."

A big favourite amongst the children and adults alike, was the Crucial Crew website which contains a rather gruesome interactive game showing the dangers of construction sites complete with animation and sound effects.

"A story line about children looking for a lost cat develops into a series of choices to be made by the pupils to decide the path taken by the heroes of the game through or around their local building site," explains King. "Needless to say, there were some grisly consequences as the Year 6 boys in particular, insisted on taking the wrong decisions at each given opportunity."

The content on the Crucial Crew website is fully backed up with teaching resources and logic trees for all of the interactive games.

To back up the content of the National Curriculum the Year 5 and 6 children also took part in discussions about recycling and sustainable construction. Led by the class teachers, Bugler

44 introduced the concepts of insulation and energy efficiency in dwellings and how these are linked to CO₂ emissions and global warming.

After individual sessions with the two top classes in the school, the younger children gathered for an assembly where King gave a talk on site safety and told the children what would be going on behind the hoarding next door.

At the end of the day, the team promised the pupils that they would be allowed to visit the project in an organised and safe way in a bid to demystify the activities on site and hopefully prevent children straying onto the site out of sheer curiosity.

The school site visits that have already been conducted on other schemes, have all been timed to coincide with interesting or eye

catching operations. This was best demonstrated in Newham where Bugler are just about to finish a 55-unit scheme for One Housing Group. The Rebecca Cheetham Nursery, whose playground directly borders the scheme, enjoyed several visits in liaison with L-P Archaeology who were investigating remains of a medieval settlement on the site.

In all of the schools that have become involved in the Bugler initiative, competitions have been run to design a poster which promotes site safety to children with book tokens awarded for the winning artwork. The artwork has been used to decorate the walls of site accommodation.

Another way that schools have become involved with the projects has been in the

naming of the new development. Where the housing association and local authority have been in agreement, competitions have taken place to allow pupils to suggest names for blocks or roads within the schemes. The most recent of these was in Hackney, where a pupil at the Mulberry Primary School chose the name "Silver Court".

While the work that Bugler does with schools may seem lighthearted, there is a serious message behind the fun and games. As King says: "In the last 10 years 16 children have been killed and over 800 injured in accidents related to construction. The philosophy of increased interaction and demystification of building sites with schools and their pupils can only help to reduce these worrying statistics." ■

