

## Youngsters take steps to save the planet with tree scheme

PLANT more trees and save the world was the message received loud and clear by pupils at a Brentwood school who have pledged to become part of a worldwide eco movement.

West Horndon Primary is the first school in Essex to hold a Plant for the Planet Academy and sign up to support the global charity in its bid to use trees to halt the damaging effect of greenhouse gases.



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The boys from the interview and SebastianCMUK20121005A-013\_C.jpg

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DIGGING IN: Thomas Pearman, 11, Connor Dinnage, 10, and Sebastian Hemmann, centre, from the charity, plant trees CMUK20121005A-013\_C

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TREE TUNE: Patrick Byrne leads the children in a song CMUK20121005A-001

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tree team: Pupils during their Plant for the Planet day, held at West Horndon Primary School CMUK20121005A-008\_C

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Pupils from three other of the county's schools dropped in to take part in the day-long workshop, which involved learning more about environmental damage, planting saplings and planning future action to help slow down climate change.

The day was organised by teacher and eco co-ordinator Julia Bolton, who heard about the German-based charity, which only came to the UK last year, and felt it fitted in with West Horndon's green ethos.

She told the Gazette: "As an eco-school, we are very proud of our participation in projects which help the environment and raise awareness of the need for sustainability.

"We already do a lot of work to help the environment: we have a tree nursery and a team of youngsters who make sure everyone recycles and saves energy, and we are constantly looking for new ways to keep it fresh and uppermost in the children's minds.

"This academy ticks so many boxes.

"It matches our environmental concerns but also has a strong community cohesion aspect as the children are working together for a common cause.

"It's lovely to watch our pupils make new friends with children from other schools and to work together in small groups to plan how they are going to help the environment."

Pupils from Warley Primary, Trinity Road Primary in Chelmsford, and St Mary's Primary, in Ardleigh, near Colchester, travelled to West Horndon for the academy.

It was led by Sebastian Hemmann, who is the English co-ordinator for the UK branch of Plant for the Planet, which was established in Germany in 2007.

The UK branch is based in Edinburgh and West Horndon is the furthest south that Sebastian and his team had travelled to run the project.

He said: "Our motto is Stop Talking, Start Planting.

"Our aim is to encourage children to become Plant for the Planet ambassadors and spread the word among their peers. Our presentation explains how climate change affects everyone and is quite complex, but I am surprised how many children here really appreciate what we are talking about .

"I ask questions and they answer as though they really understand the issue.

"They are very environmentally aware."

After Sebastian's' initial introduction, the pupils were put into mixed school groups to play a game which helped make them aware of how much carbon dioxide is produced by populations in various countries.

They then held a brainstorming session and decided to set up Plant for the Planet groups at their schools that would set a pledge of trees to be planted and monitor it.

They also decided to hold assemblies to tell their friends about the scheme.

The pupils planted 15 saplings after lunch, but more trees will come when the planting season gets underway.

Plant for the Planet has teamed up with The Woodland [Trust](#), which supplies packs of trees to schools and community organisations.



The day ended with a presentation to parents, and some pupils volunteering to become ambassadors for Plant for the Planet.

Their role will provide a link between the school and the charity and keep their peers posted on developments.

They may also be asked to take part in future academies held at schools in their area. All the children were given a Plant for the Planet T-shirt, a book explaining how climate change works, and a certificate.

Pupils were impressed with what they saw and heard.

Thomas Pearman, 11, who attends West Horndon, said: "I like our environment and I do not think it should be destroyed.

"It is alarming that the sea levels are rising and covering land.

"They should remain the same height.

"I want to live in a nice world, not a tatty one.

"I want to be an ambassador so I can tell more people about what is happening.

"The more people who realise the extent of the problem, the more likely they will help stop it."

Classmate Connor Dinnage, 10, agrees. "I felt the presentation was very open and very moving," he said.

"I feel I was blind and now I can see what is happening to our world. It is important to support the world."