

Spring Lane PLC Fruit Orchard Planting Morning

The project team at Spring Lane PLC recently created a new take on the traditional coffee morning. Not content with just offering tea, coffee and biscuits to their special visitors from PLC they invited each student to plant a fruit tree to form the new school orchard.



In addition to the students who had been specially selected, they were accompanied by some of their teachers and were joined by members of the VINCI site team and the design team from HLM Architects.

The 'Tree Planting Morning' took place on Tuesday 29th June and despite early morning rain the weather stayed dry and bright throughout.

Whilst the VIPs were enjoying refreshments in the site cabin, the VINCI Site Manager Adrian Leigh and the Sheffield BSF LEP Manager Colin Beresford welcomed the visitors to the site of their new school and invited Rebecca Wyles the Project Landscape Architect from HLM Architects to discuss why cherry, apple and pear trees had been chosen for the school orchard.



She explained that they are the hardiest fruit trees and are able to survive on more exposed sites like Spring Lane PLC and to withstand a higher level of drought and neglect than other fruit trees which will be important during school holiday periods.

The guest of honour, Pauline Good, Site Head of Service, Key Stage 4 took the opportunity to explain that the new Spring Lane PLC School is the culmination of a vision to create a centre for excellence in Sheffield that was created over 5 years ago. She reminded everyone that the success could not be attributed to anyone individual; many students and staff had contributed to the evolution of the vision.

Taking the orchard theme to heart and addressing the VIP pupils in particular she proclaimed,

"You'll all be here in September and will reap the fruits of everyone's labour"

She concluded her short speech by declaring,

"What a fabulous start we have in this excellent building that will become a nationally recognised centre of excellence."

Adrian Leigh reminded everyone that they were entering a live working site and needed to take special precautions. So once everyone was comfortably attired in safety boots, helmets, vests and gloves the visitors trooped down to the orchard area ready for some hard work.

A tree was planted by a member of the site landscaping team who explained what he was doing as he went along; showing the students how big to dig their hole and how deep to bury the tree to give it the best chance of survival. As soon as he had answered a few pertinent questions, everyone eagerly grabbed a shovel and selected their tree; choosing from 5 apples, 3 cherries and 3 pear trees.



The orchard site was suddenly a hive of activity and the ten new fruit trees were soon planted in their pre-designated positions supported by strong tree stakes to give each tree the best possible chance of survival.



Adrian Leigh, Rebecca Martin and the other members of the project teams took a few minutes to reflect on the morning's successful work which was best summed up by Colin Beresford Sheffield BSF LEP Manager, who commented,

“It’s so rewarding to see the students getting so involved in the development of their new school, and at the same time, a little awe inspiring to imagine how this orchard will mature over the coming years and try to picture the hundreds of young people who’s education experience will be improved and enhanced by these building and landscaping works.”