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Hodge Hill Students Concerned about the Quality of their Communities - New Report

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Most 14-16 year old students in the six schools of the Hodge Hill constituency in Birmingham are concerned about values and character and about the quality of their communities and the society in which they are growing up, according to a report 'The Values and Character Dispositions of 14-16 Year Olds' by a University of Birmingham academic, and launched today Monday 09 November.

Professor James Arthur, from the University's School of Education carried out a study to explore the attitudes, dispositions and values of students in Hodge Hill School, Hodge Hill School for Girls, International School and Community College, Park View School, Saltley School of Community College and Washwood Heath Technology College.

Students in Hodge Hill live in one of the most socially and economically deprived areas in the UK; many of them come from underprivileged backgrounds. The local community provides very few public amenities to stimulate the development of character skills, with few public libraries, community centres, youth clubs or sporting accessible to young people.

"The findings of this study are consistent with other research in this area, pointing towards the need for character and values education to assume a more central role in the education system as a complement to the acquisition of academic skills and qualifications," Prof. Arthur reveals.

The launch event was hosted by Liam Byrne MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, at Westminster Abbey.

"Our young people confront a 'power failure'; they have no-one to help deliver sufficient servings of inspiration, steadiness and sheer savoir faire to make it on and up in life," Liam Byrne observed.

The study also reveals that these students have a positive self-image in contrast with the negative, self centred image often presented by the media.

Most of the students said they do not engage in their local community, but a majority said they would vote if they could.

A large majority of the students, especially black and Asian, expressed high academic aspirations, according to the report.

Many of the students also expressed an interest in character development and identified school as a place that could do more to develop character.

The report also highlights differences between views expressed by boys and girls, by members of different ethnic or religious groups, by those whose parents had different levels of education, by only children and by those with siblings.

The research involved collaboration with Dr. Robert Harding and Dr. Ray Godfrey, from Canterbury Christ Church University. The project was funded by the John Templeton Foundation and by UK based charitable foundations.

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