

Dear Matt

I wanted to write to say thank you so much to the group of young people from the Academy who came to Gems last Thursday, and to you and the other leaders too.

They were coming into a completely different environment to what they are used to but it was so good to see that right from the start they entered into everything enthusiastically and all of them were extremely helpful and polite throughout their time with us. For me personally, it was great to have them there – each of them did whatever was asked of them with good grace and a smile and they were a big help throughout.

They coped remarkably well with serving lunch, which isn't easy, and it was good to see them chatting easily and freely to the older people as they ate lunch together.

All the Gems clients were full of praise for the young people and there were many comments along the lines of "I don't know why people complain about teenagers – these are lovely" and "I didn't think young people could be so polite and helpful". Your visit certainly broke down barriers and challenged stereotypes. The lady who does keep fit, who isn't normally one to enthuse, wrote on her register that she had had some extra clients and also wrote "this was a brilliant session". I have never known her to write a comment on her register before, so she must have been well impressed! I have even heard comments from people who weren't at Gems on Thursday but who have been told by those who were what a wonderful time they had with the young people from the Academy.

Thanks so much for organising this, Matt.

Lynne